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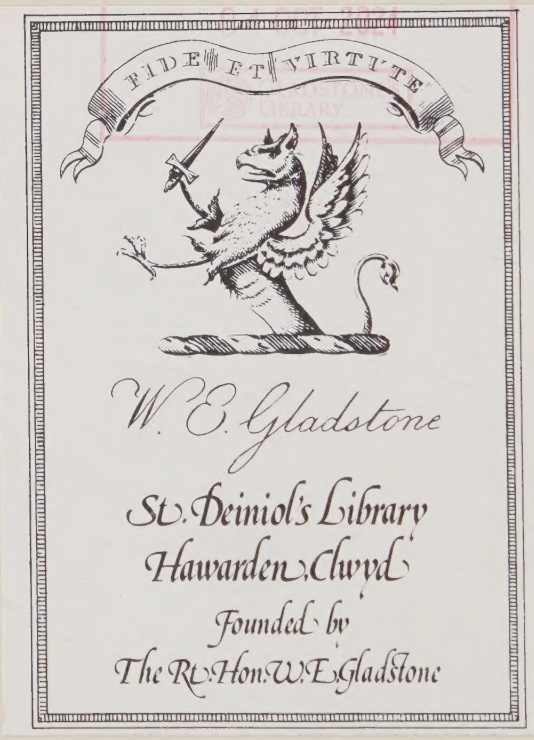

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JESUS—LORD OR LEADER?

BY

FRANK LENWOOD

Author of
Pastels from the Pacific
Social Problems and the East
Forces of the Spirit

Gladstone's Library
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TO

MY WIFE

WITHOUT WHOSE READINESS TO TREAD
IN FAITH AN UNTRIED PATH THE
BOOK COULD NOT HAVE
BEEN WRITTEN

"A few weeks before he died, he dreamt that he was sitting on the hillside; seeing a storm approach he began to make for shelter to the trees, but as the storm broke and the lightning began to play, he realised that beneath the great trees there was no safe shelter; he turned his face, therefore, away from the trees and out towards the open country."—*Thomas Ball Silcock:* a Memoir by NATHANIEL MICKLEM.

"No one pours fresh wine into old wine-skins."—*Mark* ii. 22.

"Reveal our unbelief to be faith, fretting at its outworn form."

The Temple: W. E. ORCHARD.

PREFACE

My reasons for writing this book and the standpoint from which I write are explained in the first Chapter.

Throughout I have attempted to make the thought and allusions to other books as simple as such a subject would allow. For the same reason I have introduced all the chapters but the first with a summary. Any reader who does not wish to go into detail may skip the first three of the appendices.

While aiming at simplicity I have done my best to reckon with the results of modern scholarship. I have, however, deliberately omitted reference to the work of the *Form-Geschichte* school during the last ten years. Some of its conclusions are not new to students, and others are so extreme as to be likely to make men despair of retaining anything about Jesus upon which they can depend. Further, even if I were convinced by what is new in its arguments, I cannot see that this would radically alter the conditions of the problem of Christology as created by the data already before us.

I have made frequent quotations. It seemed fairer to let authors speak for themselves, all the more when, as friend pitting his mind against friend, I felt compelled to make their words a text for disagreement. I have to thank the authors and publishers whose names are attached to each of the longer quotations for their kind permission to use them. In naming the authors I have as far as possible followed the German plan of dropping titles. To do so is more workmanlike and seems better to befit the democracy of modern theological exploration. The authors themselves will welcome it; if any of their friends are inclined to think it discourteous, I would remind them that, when mentioning acknowledged authorities, we regard titles as irrelevant!

Many friends have helped at various stages by reading the manuscript or proofs,—too many to thank by name. Three, however, I must single out. I owe much to C. H. Dodd, now proceeding to Manchester University to be its Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis, and to H. G. Wood of Woodbrooke, for general advice and careful criticism of detail. The debt is none the less because, if I judge rightly, they do not accept my main argument, nor because one of them by the effectiveness of his criticism committed me to a year's extra work! The third is Miss Hilda M. Bishop, who has brought untiring and invaluable assistance in choosing the best form of expression, together with a sensitive understanding of the purpose which, by God's grace, the book ought to serve.

FRANK LENWOOD.

Plaistow, London E.
July 30th, 1930.

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JESUS—LORD OR LEADER?

I

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

Theology must spring from spiritual experience. A true instinct prompts men to distrust the academic treatment of questions of faith and all such conclusions as seem to have their birth in the study or lecture-room. The personal history which has given rise to this book is, therefore, not irrelevant. On the one hand the book owes part of its message to thoughts which haunt the minds of many in the Churches and on their fringe. Only by assimilation from the surrounding atmosphere could the seedling have grown into its present form. Yet on the other hand the seed came from the lessons and opportunities of my life.

My father was brought up in the Church of England among those who held firm to Evangelical doctrine. Distrusting what he thought to be the compromises of the Prayer Book, he became a Baptist minister. He did not find rest there, for he could not accept the belief in eternal punishment which was common sixty years ago. For that and other reasons he resigned his Church.

He was then received into the Congregational ministry and in his Church in Sheffield met and married a granddaughter of John Pye-Smith, the theologian. Into the minister's home I was born. To its affection and self-sacrifice, to the sincerity and beauty of its religion, I owe one of the great debts of my life—perhaps the greatest. But it was not all beautiful. My father was anxious that we should enter into the Evangelical experience and also that we should use our time profitably. As he had small understanding of child psychology, he pressed upon me solid

reading that might have been suitable for a little Macaulay, and I learnt some lessons in dishonesty, over and above those which come natural to most children, from the devices by which I managed to read adventure stories instead. I was precocious, and, falling under other demoralizing influences, from ten to thirteen I went into the far country. If I had stayed there longer it might have been difficult to retrace my steps. But I can see now that, as adolescence drew on, another impulse was stirring in my mind. I changed my friends. And in Newcastle-on-Tyne on a morning I can well remember—I was not quite fourteen—the sudden inrush of an unexpected emotion swept me off my feet. There was nothing outward to account for it. I recall no external influence of any sort. It was when I took my cap to go to school—not a moment of great happenings. My mother said a word or two of praise and I broke down. She left me till evening to talk it over, but all through that day with a mixture of gladness and terror I knew that conversion had come and that I had got to be a Christian. The talk and prayer of the evening was just a registration of something that had already happened. I had given myself to Christ.

The psychology of it all is clear enough to me now, but not less clear is the work of a divine and loving power, using my normal growth to disgust me with evil and to make me seek the way of Jesus. Never for a moment have I repented that day. My whole life turned upon it.

I was sent on to a secondary school in Sheffield, and later to Rugby. In both I tried to serve Christ and to bring others to Christ. Priggishness and self-consciousness I have to regret, and both schools thought me strange,—the younger generation does these things more naturally, when it does them,—but of the impulse itself I have nothing to regret.

Then I went to Oxford intending to be a missionary. In the second term came a period of fierce temptation. I found deliverance in the message of Christ's forgiveness, and through the certainty that in spite of utter failure I could trust Him to accept my love.

After taking my degree in "literæ humaniores" in 1897

I began three years of theology. About that time I came into eager fellowship with the Student Christian Movement and for the next ten years I owed most of my spiritual education to it on the one hand and to Mansfield College on the other. I did my share of the evangelistic work of the Movement, and my speaking and writing were the external factors in bringing some to put their faith in the lordship and divinity of Christ. From 1901–6 I was New Testament tutor in Mansfield College with pastoral charge of those Free Church undergraduates who worshipped on Sundays in its chapel, a post which offered to me and to my wife the sort of opportunity which comes to few, and I was a regular member of Sanday's seminar on the Synoptic Problem.

After a long tour through China, Japan and India we were appointed in 1909 to Benares in North India, and in and round that sacred city tried to win Indians for Christ. There I gained an appreciation of the Eastern mind and of the New Testament as a missionary book. The contact also forced me up against some of the problems of comparative religion. In 1912 typhoid brought me back to recover strength in England and I could not refuse the call to be one of the two Foreign Secretaries of the London Missionary Society. In the circle of missionary leaders of many Churches I spent thirteen very happy years for a cause it was an honour to serve and alongside some of the ablest brains and finest characters to be found in the English-speaking world. I made rich friendships too with men on the Continent. In that thirteen years, as in all my life, I saw over and over again the manifest working of God's power.

In the meantime I had managed now and then to snatch half an hour for my Greek Testament—just enough to keep me a lodging in the outer courts of Biblical study. Then quite suddenly and unexpectedly I discovered that my theology had altered. By a sub-conscious process like that described in the quotation from William James on p. 28, an accumulation of small discoveries and unrelated facts of criticism which I had accepted one by one, had organized themselves into a conclusion entirely new to me.

I found that for all his uniqueness I believed Jesus to be divine only in the sense in which it is possible to use the word of any other good and great man. At the same time I could not feel that my religion was changed, except for such maturing as years of Christian living ought naturally to ensure.

Not wishing my views to embarrass the Society that I love, I resigned in 1925. I should in any case have resigned in two or three years, for I had never thought it wise to look forward to a prolonged period of secretarial service.

I spent fifteen months in furbishing up my knowledge of the New Testament. I had lost twenty years of the study which would have kept me familiar with the work done upon it. On the other hand I had twenty years' fuller experience of men and of religion, Christian and non-Christian. I had been schooled to appreciate the degree to which Christianity was spreading the Gospel of Jesus among the great peoples of the East and in islands and territories known to few. I had been in touch with leaders of Churches which some day will do for their nations what the early Church did for the Roman Empire. In the twenty years I had seen many a proof that the way of Jesus is the sure way of deliverance and progress, for peoples as for individuals.

I was joyfully surprised to find that four-fifths of the notes made twenty years before in the interleavings of my New Testament texts were still living and apposite. When I left Oxford in 1909, I had feared that door was closed for ever. For four years I have been the minister of a small Church in the east of Greater London, a Church with a large proportion of young people, whose leaders were dissatisfied with the usual presentation of Christianity. There too God's power is working; men and women are learning faith in God; and amid the stumbling-blocks which our industrial and social system scatters so recklessly round their feet they are trying to tread the path of Jesus.

In describing the earlier stages of my experience I have purposely used the old phrases which I should have used

for many following years. Then I used them because the Church had taught them to me. I love them all, the thoughts, the hymns, the phrases. I cannot continue to repeat them, for my theology has changed. Yet I must insist that, as far as I can tell, my religion has changed little. On none of the experience do I go back; from beginning to end it was of God. That I can no longer describe it in the same phrases does not in any measure invalidate it. God leads us on to higher truth, but that is no excuse for despising the earlier truth by which alone we could have been prepared. I can no longer use the old words to express my faith, but in the main it is the same faith.

It is for these reasons that I felt the call to try and clear the ground for those who have similar perplexities, without the certainties of which my life has assured me. As long as the Church appears to present a front of unbroken orthodoxy, numbers of these will stay in the wilderness outside. Many of them are young and their elders say to them: "You had better make up your mind to believe. Mr. X. has studied these things at College, and he manages to hold the standard belief." For the sake of these searching young spirits, if any of us happen to be Mr. X. and we do not believe, we are in duty bound to say so beyond the risk of misunderstanding. If their views bar the door to their admission, we who hold the same views inside cannot honourably hold our peace.

I find others who have moved to the same negative conclusions, and have quietly sheered away from organized religion. I plead that the Church and the Churches, denominational and local, should offer them the chance to join in the Christian way of life and to share the faith in God which is its power. My only fear is that for some of them books such as this may come too late.

To many this book will bring pain. Some through the pain will find liberation into a wider confidence. The attitude of numerous individual Christians, taken with the speaking and writing of many preachers and teachers, suggests that they have become sub-consciously dissatisfied

with the more or less orthodox arguments they continue to use. It is possible that before long they too may find their theology at rest in a new equilibrium. To others I fear I shall give only pain. In my statement they will be unable to see anything but "invincible ignorance" and wilful error. But if at some crisis there should remain with them a suspicion that a son or daughter who rejects the older views is not a withered branch to be cut off and cast into the fire, this book will have done some service to the younger generation. In any case I pray that, however little we may understand one another, we may not be driven to sunder our Christian fellowship.

I know that a man is often right in his affirmations and wrong in his negations. In certain stages of inquiry, however, the only preparation for a restatement new enough to meet the current need is to reject the old. The Church is always trying to put new wine into old wineskins. The result is not invariably disaster, for the epigram of Jesus has not a universal application. But there are periods of which the epigram does hold—and this is one of them. As the vintner must scrap his wineskins, so the theologian must repudiate certain outworn teachings by a flat negation. Till he does, men will not set themselves seriously to the task of making the new.

I have sought to shun reassuring ambiguities. Anything short of plain speech is discourteous and ineffective in such an emergency.

At the same time I have tried to set out as fully as possible those positive assurances which, by what seems to me the leading of God's Spirit, have replaced the old theology. For myself they contain a simpler and surer Gospel and they seem to come as "good news" to the ears of others. But the limits of this book, and even more the limits of my own spiritual insight, make it inevitable that anything positive that I can contribute should be imperfect and provisional. Please God, when we have unravelled some of the mental entanglements of the old system, abler men, holier and more constructive, will provide us with new interpretations to guide us on the new journey that opens out ahead.

Obviously I should not have dared to write unless under the conviction that what I had to say was true. But I recognize that I may be completely mistaken. If so, there still remains a way in which God may use this book. The witty principal of an Anglican Theological College remarked, they say, that, when God wanted to re-establish a doctrine of the Church, He raised up a fool to question it. The principal went on to name three modern instances. It would be worth while for any man to have his name added in the fourth place, if as the result of his sincere but mistaken advocacy the Church should come to know better what the brave, beloved figure of Jesus really means.

II

Summary

The last fifty years a period of radical change in physical science, intellectual method and morality. Naturally religion has also changed. Historical criticism, accepted with reluctance for the Old Testament, has inevitably been extended to the New.

The consequences more serious than is generally realized to the foundations of Christian theology, especially when it goes back to mediæval conceptions. Perplexity is widespread and theologians give little help. Standard books, *e.g.* on the Incarnation and Atonement, are out of date and it does not meet the need of the age to abandon doctrines no longer held without calling attention to the abandonment.

This epoch is unexampled for mental disturbance and the only way to meet it is to leave the shelter of infallibilities and face truth fearlessly. In the Churches practices and ritual persist which are inconsistent with our real belief, and many of our general statements of theology fail to allow for the modification of most of the data on which they were originally based.

"Conventions" are the outcome of the necessary process by which a belief is popularized. But the "convention" may last on after the belief has decayed from its centre. Much of our Christian orthodoxy is such a "convention."

More than we realize, our theological systems are affected by interstitial alteration, and when that happens they may easily become a danger such as it is imperative to clear away.

Yet the essentials of the Christianity enshrined in them will not suffer.

II

SHIFTING FOUNDATIONS

All sound argument begins with truism, and, if we are to prepare ourselves to consider the need for theological restatement, we must steep our minds in the truism that these are times of change. Take for instance a man in middle life, someone like myself, if you will, who can just remember things that happened fifty years ago. It is cold fact that such a man has passed through a period of innovation the like of which can scarcely be found in history. From 1880 to 1930, what an epoch it has been!

In 1880, apart from the arterial service of the railways, we depended on horses for travel or transport; now we have motors and a network of air services. The change is typical of a score of departments in which our life has been transformed. During this period electricity has fought its way into practical use and trunk railway lines span continents whose fringes were barely explored half a century ago. This is the generation of the gramophone and the cinema. Medical science has upset the old balance of diseases; in the routine of their practice doctors now cure patients whom our fathers would have given up as beyond hope. In X-rays the physician has a new instrument for diagnosis as for treatment.

The discovery of the possibility of transmitting electricity without wires has opened up another territory of scientific investigation. The most imaginative can draw no picture of the development which a score of years will see. It is plain however that to-day's society, advanced as we think it, is likely to be scrapped to make room for a world conditioned by wireless. Fixity, settlement, finality, as we have hitherto understood them, are out of the question

for the next generation. This part of the revolution has needed less than a quarter-century.

Someone may object that these changes in the material sphere have little to do with the spiritual. Philosophic scientists are not likely to give much support to such a criticism; they see that it is now impossible to keep the material in a closed compartment from which the spiritual is shut out. And the theologian will ignore these revolutions at his peril. Anyone who honestly examines his own experience will admit that these material changes have altered every portion of our life and that the spiritual is no exception.

Though the physical advance has been first the child, and then in turn the parent, of mental change, any radical modification of our intellectual processes develops of necessity more slowly. Yet in that sphere also there has been notable alteration. The new universities and secondary schools have spread education over a far larger proportion of our people, and the older universities have been stimulated to make better use of their immense resources. All education has been touched, and in the main for good. The poorest school in the country would be ashamed to teach a boy as I was taught in 1884 by masters of a provincial Grammar School of some standing. When three years ago I came to live in West Ham, I was encouraged to find that the scholarship system has brought training of a fine quality within the reach of thousands. The abolition of the old tests of belief has unchained exploration in the universities, and to this in part we owe the wide use of the critical method in history and literature. History has so wide a liberty to destroy, to speculate, to construct, that its general standards are entirely different from those of fifty years ago. Then a few historians were handling their material with freedom, now only men of that temper can claim to be historians. As Bishop Gore says:

> And the judge—that is, historical science—is, it must be acknowledged, a new judge, sitting in a new court, demanding to hear the case afresh. The question, in

other words, is in great measure a new question, for the science of history is a fairly new science. (*Can We Then Believe?* p. 73.)

As for physical science, what has been said about the revolution in our practical life will give us some measure of its conquering advance. Once it could lay claim to the equipment it required, science went forward with a sweep of intellectual conquest. The principle of evolution has become a common instrument for every subject of study. At the same time science has increased its influence by putting aside the unimaginative dogmas of the chemical and physical schools, and, as biology and psychology come into their own, it begins to clothe itself with wonder as with a garment. Psychology has brought in new methods of healing the human organism, and exact thinkers, as well as the light cavalry of psychological speculation, are looking forward to discoveries along the uncharted tract which now we label telepathy.

The increase in the communication of printed ideas has affected the quality of our thinking. It has, of course, also given rise to certain obvious disadvantages and we may admit that the greater spirits of a century ago show a mental depth and a capacity in handling their problems which we envy to-day. Yet we know these greater spirits precisely because they succeeded in breaking the fetters their period imposed and hardened their muscles in the struggle. Ordinary men were limited by the rarity of intercourse with other circles working on the same problems and by the smallness of the local group which could criticize or help. In these days the thoughts of discoverers attract the attention of hundreds where they were once accessible to tens. Should they need revision, there is now more chance that they will receive it; should they stand the test, others will use them as the accepted bases of further attempts to build.

If corporate development is slower on the intellectual than on the practical side, morality changes more slowly than our processes of thought. Yet it also has changed.

Among a collection of prayers published in 1913 * a number are impossible to use because they assume that the difference between rich and poor is something to be mitigated but not challenged as fundamentally unchristian. Some speak of it as ordained of God. Many of these prayers were written in the last century. From 1900 onwards Christians have been less complacent. D. C. Somervell makes just comment on the continued failure of Gladstone to be interested in the social problem.† Contrast that with the Liberal Report on Industry, to say nothing of the Labour Party, itself an ethical quite as much as a political portent.

Though my father gave away a large proportion of his income, I do not think that it ever occurred to him to question the morality of the whole system of absentee shareholding. I admit that this generation has not begun to solve the problem, but it is something that we recognize the problem to be there.

Then again there is the subject of war. In J. A. Spender's *Life, Journalism and Politics* (Cassell) there is a discussion of the general attitude of enlightened leaders of pre-war opinion to the politics of war:

> We now habitually speak of "War-guilt" as the greatest of public crimes, and have almost persuaded ourselves that we have always thought of war in this way.
>
> This it seems to me is an illusion . . . we did not speak or think in that way before the war.
>
> The truth is that in the world in which we were brought up, the crime was not to make war but to make it unsuccessfully, and so it had been from the beginning of time . . . those who came back in triumph were almost invariably acclaimed as great statesmen and saviours of their country, regardless of whether they were aggressors or were resisting aggression. . . . Somewhere about the year 1900 I got myself into much trouble for saying, "There is no peace-at-

* *A Chain of Prayer across the Ages*, Selina Fox.
† *Studies in Statesmanship.*

any-price party; there are only various parties which disapprove of each other's wars. All the peace parties that I have known have ardently desired to make war on the Sultan of Turkey, but most of them appear to regard it as a humanitarian picnic, which is almost certainly a delusion." . . .

We might debate angrily about the sufficiency of the cause, but we never denied that, if the cause was sufficient, war was the legitimate *ultima ratio*, and not merely for the defence of territory, but also for what were conceived to be the interests of the British Empire or the resentment of injuries to it. (ii. 174–7.)

That day has passed. Men of public spirit have a new judgment of war.

One more example, that of sex. There fifty years have wrought significant alterations. A veil was drawn over the sins of sex, at least in ordinary middle-class society. It was a bad thing that women should become prostitutes, but it was wrong to talk about it, even in order to seek a remedy. Think for instance of the abuse heaped upon Mrs. Josephine Butler, and the deep-seated conviction that men in general need not, indeed normally could not, attempt the standard expected of women. We live in a new world, no doubt for much evil, but I am sure also greatly for good.

In face of the changes at which we have hinted in the physical, intellectual and moral spheres, is it surprising that for all its roots in the past, religion has changed? Limiting the question to Great Britain, we may ask whether any half-century has produced such a revolution in religious thought. In 1880 few advocates of foreign missions would have actively disapproved of a wholesale condemnation of the religions of the "heathen." By this time the scientific comparison of various beliefs and worships has compelled us to reckon sympathetically with the good in other forms of faith. Our approach to these must now be based on the idea that God has not anywhere left Himself without witness.

In 1870 Robertson Smith was appointed professor of

Old Testament Exegesis at Aberdeen. Eleven years later he was dismissed for the advanced character of his biblical articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Mine was a typical Christian home and I well remember my mother's fear of "Dr. Horton and those dreadful 'new lights' who are tearing the Bible to pieces." When in 1897 I entered Mansfield College after the philosophy and ancient history of the Oxford "Greats" course, I had picked up from friends already in Mansfield a few stray and unpalatable references to Old Testament criticism. In my secret heart I cherished the conviction that the whole business was wrong and that, if I could get knowledge enough, I might help to bring it to naught. The presumption was not altogether my fault. School equipped me with nothing but the traditional views of the Old Testament and in my undergraduate days no one carried me further.

Before the end of the first term I surrendered. I saw that the principles which I had applied to Greek documents for "Greats," I must also apply to the Hebrew. But then came the criticism of the New Testament. For that we were largely dependent on the Germans. Through the nineteenth century they had done work of a faithfulness and originality such as was rare in Great Britain. While studying the Gospels you make a discovery of some new contact or contrast, some interconnection or inconsistency for which no English professor or commentary has prepared you. In nineteen instances out of twenty, if you read the German literature on the subject, you will find that a German teacher forestalled the discovery a generation and a half ago. The books which in English seem original—and often are entirely independent—are frequently a repetition of theories set forth some time back in Germany. Yet some of those most prominent in German scholarship seemed to forget that the New Testament contained a Gospel and that those who do not feel it to be the good news of God are not likely to catch the most beautiful accents of its message. They seemed also to assume that man's nature was made up exclusively of intellect. It was

this impression which kept theologians in this country from giving the attention it deserved to the more radical German literature upon the New Testament.

For we were still hoping that, as at last we had been honest in applying critical methods to the Old Testament, we might be let off the painful task of revaluing the New. There was a tacit agreement to draw the line. We assured one another that the New Testament was different, because it had to do with Jesus Christ and that here we could depend on his personal authority and not on a mere collection of books. During my course the college was addressed by one who had done much to popularize the criticism of both Testaments. He told us that we must not expect or attempt to apply the same standards to the New Testament as to the Old. These could not touch the essentials of the New Testament, for it gave us the eternal revelation of God in His Son, Jesus Christ. We students smiled at one another as we went out of the lecture-room. Yet I fancy that most of those who detected the fallacy in our visitor's logic, continued for many a long year to follow his principle in our workaday handling of the Bible. But forces were at work which were destined to produce the change we now see. About this date A. B. Bruce published his commentary on the first three Gospels in the Expositor's Greek Testament. It did not go the whole way, but by the questions it brought to our minds it helped to establish the conviction that in the long run the New Testament would have to be treated like any other book. Up till then it is not too harsh to say that practically all English and most Scots criticism of the New Testament had been not criticism but apologetic. From that tradition we have not altogether broken free.

Yet what a change it is! The New Testament documents are now treated as history to be investigated and not as dogmatic text-books which we must accept as our religious foundations. The increasing freedom of our study of general literature has led to a real study of the Bible. The developments of science have produced a different attitude to miracle. Fifty years ago Jesus was

acknowledged as the Son of God because he performed miracles. Now we feel that these make it harder for us to accept the story and we still remain uneasy when we are assured that we can abandon them one by one and need only rest on the one central miracle of the person of Jesus himself.* While we may over-estimate the numbers of those who have been influenced by radical criticism, there is a growing number of educated people who treat as ordinary history, not alone the Old Testament, but also the New. It would not be too much to say that among guides of public opinion, teachers of all grades, journalists and others, there are a large majority who accept the more radical presuppositions of Biblical criticism. They would not, for instance, receive the stories of the miraculous birth of Jesus except as beautiful tales for the first lessons of children, and they do not believe the accounts of the Resurrection appearances as they stand.

The instinct of the unnamed predecessors of the Fundamentalists has been justified by the movements of these fifty years. They were right in feeling that if men denied verbal inspiration to the more important parts of the Old Testament, they would be unable to shelter the New from the rigours of criticism. Those of us who argued that we could treat the Hebrew literature as an example of a great religious evolution in which much was primitive, fabulous, and even unethical, and at the same time handle the Gospels

* Here it may be worth while to give one warning. Some Christian apologists are encouraged by the discoveries of the marvels of nature and the human mind to believe that science is beginning to support the miracles of the New Testament. All depends on what we mean by "support." It is true that modern science frequently suggests that the records of unusual occurrences which in the past seemed incredible are no longer beyond the range of belief. But this means no more than that, as they fit in with laws which have been discovered of late, they can be naturally explained. That explanation gives no endorsement to the idea of an abnormal manifestation of God's power, the idea which ruled the minds of those who first told the stories and for which orthodoxy has always valued them. Rather it reduces them to simple, if rare, phenomena, which call for no unique intervention of the divine, and may happen wherever the conditions are fulfilled. Certain of the Bible stories may now look to science for corroboration, but only at the price of the interpretation which made them significant for dogmatic religion. Modern science cannot be used to underpin orthodoxy.

and the Epistles with a gentleness which would cause no tremor around the foundations of our theological breakwaters, were deluding ourselves and others. We encouraged one another to satisfy the demands of intellectual honesty and to turn hopefully away from its probable consequences. But the streams which came trickling in had behind them the force of the ocean: the sluice-gates which we thought would stem the tide are swallowed up or falling before our eyes. It is no longer worth while to warn people against building on the sand, the rock itself is doubtful now. To-day we have to ask whether there is anything set firm enough to keep its place in the universal flux. The Fundamentalists are not far out when they say that the channels we cut for safety have let in the tide to disintegrate our embankment. The strata beneath have been undermined.

A perception that the critics had found it impossible to stop where they intended filtered through to many sensitive people who would not claim to be theologians. This, together with the growing certainty that the modern tendencies of science were in conflict with the orthodox statement of Christianity, has eaten away confidence. Outside the Church the impression has gained ground—to the evident satisfaction of some—that Christianity is a pricked bladder. What is more important is that doubt has laid hold increasingly upon many Christian minds. Here is a second passage from J. A. Spender:

> It is, I think, the failure of the clergy to understand what is going on in the minds of the religiously inclined laity which is responsible for the decline of organized religion.
>
> . . . the young men of these times . . . cannot honestly interpret the creeds and dogmas in the mediæval sense which the traditional Churches require, and they shrink from the modernist casuistry which would interpret them as allegories and parables. These men will only be brought back if the ground is cleared of creeds and dogmas which cannot be believed in a natural sense. (*Op. cit.*, ii. pp. 199 f.)

Spender has in view those of a high standard of education. But in principle his words are true of numbers of ordinary folk. The common man puzzles things out for himself, usually without much success. You have to shout very loud to get his attention and most of those who might have enlightened him have not been ill-bred enough to shout. To do so would have been too disturbing to organized religion. When a few have spoken out with frankness, they have usually had to do their prophesying in isolation, for the preachers and laymen who sympathized with the frank speakers have rarely felt the urgency of ranging themselves alongside. The newspapers provide some fine confused feeding.* So the numbers of the perplexed have increased and the Church does not seem to realize how urgent is the need to give them help.

Meantime those who are shocked by inquiry try to drown each unwelcome voice with noisy, confident indignation. When it comes to head-counting, the Fundamentalists muster many heads, and within the Church and in various Christian organizations they often control finance sufficiently

* Journalists unfortunately do not always write in consistency with their beliefs or at least with consideration of the duty they have to maintain a continuous policy of popular education. Flagrant instances may be found in the treatment of Bishop Gore's *New Commentary on the Holy Scripture* published on December 1st, 1928.

The *Daily News* had an article on that date with the title "Upsetting the Bible." Though it ends with half a dozen lines saying that "To the younger generation the commentary will appeal as an honest attempt to meet the difficulties of the Bible in a reasonable spirit and in the light of modern scholarship" and that Dr. Gore "paves a path for them by which they can secure faith as well as freedom," the earlier portion of the article is disfigured by phrases like these: "the conclusions . . . will fill with dismay and confusion literally thousands of good Church people." "From beginning to end this scholarly commentary is full of points that conflict with the old-time view . . . I have recorded only a few of its remarkable conclusions. The critic can find hundreds." The quotations and abstracts given make it plain that the Commentary is on the whole conservative and that the "remarkable conclusions" are only what every trained theologian has accepted for the last twenty years. Yet all across the page runs the heading in heavy type, "A Bishop's Book of Bible Doubts."

This paper came down editorially on the side of Dr. Major when he was attacked before the Church Congress and has on several occasions supported the Bishop of Birmingham. But other papers were making a stunt of the *New Commentary* and the *Daily News* was induced to do the same, without observing the inconsistency.

to make it difficult for modernism to have a hearing. There is point in Kirsopp Lake's warning:

> So far as the churches are concerned, if any one of the three parties [Experimentalists, Institutionalists and Fundamentalists] wins completely and speedily, it is likely to be the Fundamentalists. . . . Education which, at least in the United States, . . . is largely controlled by political agencies, may possibly pass into Fundamentalist hands and be retarded for generations. . . . It may appear to large financial interests that industrial stability can be safeguarded by Fundamentalists who can be trusted to teach "anti-revolutionary" doctrine in politics and economics as well as in theology. . . .
>
> It is conceivable that Fundamentalism will succeed in driving out from the Christian Church all Experimentalists and that the two factors just mentioned will prolong its existence for many years. (*Religion of Yesterday and To-morrow*, pp. 159 f. Christophers.)

This means that any failure to publish the results of criticism and modern investigation may actually change the nature of the Church and permit men to delimit unworthily the objects for which it is to use its power.

In this difficulty the theologians help us very little. Speaking broadly there is no book which has impressed itself on the modern mind as a satisfactory defence of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation. On the other hand, religious leaders tell us that we ought to read Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows*, though it has no trace of the theory of Christ's divinity, and in circles not openly unorthodox great praise has been given to such humanistic lives of Jesus as that by Middleton Murry. In recent years probably no book outside the New Testament has done so much as *By an Unknown Disciple* to endear the thought of Jesus to educated men and women under thirty-five. I have found Sunday School teachers drawing inspiration from it without turning aside to notice that the Jesus it pictures could nowhere be described as God the Son. Indeed it is the

very unorthodoxy of the book that helps them. How that would have shocked Sunday School authorities half a century ago!

Dale's book on the Atonement was reprinted from a series of lectures in 1875. At that time the ordinary members of our Churches knew something of the sacrificial system of the Jews in the Old Testament. Many of them could follow the arguments of Paul and even those of the Epistle to the Hebrews and on that foundation it was possible to build a doctrine of the Atonement. But most of the best trained Christian minds of to-day have no more religious interest in the sacrificial system of the Jews than in that of the Hindus. They are ready to study it in order to throw light upon the mind of Paul or the other writers of the New Testament, but in itself it means no more than that men once thought to please and approach God by sacrifice. We have now a different view of God, a view which would appear in some ways to be more like that held by Jesus himself, and in consequence, though we have honest and thoughtful studies of the Atonement, there is none which commands a general sale. We must not of course shut our eyes to the masses of Christian folk, forming groups in the Churches or gathering meetings of their own, who still teach a "full doctrine" of the Atonement, that is to say, the theory of atonement by substitution of another who bears the punishment of the sinner. But these are out of touch with the scientific thought of the day, and often take some pains to keep it at a distance. For the rest the spread of education is making all the older ideas of atonement impossible. Indeed orthodox theology as a whole is inarticulate, most inarticulate when it is most fluent.

I do not of course mean that the Church has been totally insensitive to the changes of the time. We shall note later the significant power of the teaching of Jesus to return upon itself and by selective emphasis to raise itself to the levels necessary to retain its spiritual pre-eminence over each advancing stage of Christian civilization. This power has had partial freedom to operate in the Church of to-day. We see its influence in the way preachers emphasize the

passages offering a picture of God's nature which this generation can accept. Earlier generations gave these less than their full value. Here we owe something to the New Theology movement of 1906 led by R. J. Campbell. But for the most part the new temper shows itself in the quiet abandonment of outworn doctrines, so quiet that most of the congregations do not notice the alteration, and go on repeating the hackneyed arguments in a vain attempt to satisfy the restless younger minds. Hymns, prayers, the traditional use of the Bible, the teaching of the Sunday School and for that matter of the day school, continue to witness for the old theology. For alongside the omissions there are not enough explicit statements of principle and ascertainment, not enough at least which are co-ordinated with one another to show their organic result. The negatives and the positives are not correlated. We cannot bring the Bible up to date by leaving out the books and chapters we do not like, while we give no explanation to the average man in the congregation of the reason for dispensing with them. Modernization by omission inspires nobody.

Some may say that all this is but the delusion, recurrent in every age, that the upheavals which shake its institutions are more violent than those of any previous period. The counterplea leaves me unconvinced. In the nineteen hundred years of Christian history has there ever been such an age of mental disturbance? Ever an age in which so many presuppositions came toppling down, and so many of the axioms were cracked to a degree that makes it certain they will not long support the upper storeys of tradition? General opinion must decide.

Indeed we are bound to ask: Are these upheavals finished? In science, plainly not. In other ranges of the intellect, plainly not. What an expansion we can foresee from the generation which has been brought up to "the wireless mind" and begins to assume Einstein's theory or the modern explanation of the atom as the basis of its thinking. Religion and morality contain more of the things which cannot be shaken, because they are related to the universal tendencies of human nature, but it is difficult to believe that

in these alone we can hope to evade the necessity for reconstruction. A little while ago people and papers were talking of a stirring in orthodox Christianity, an approaching era of revival and advance. There are signs of it, but, unless I am very much mistaken, we shall first have to pass through a period of scrapping and rejection.

Further, when the revival has come, and in its train restatement, new attacks will follow. Everything will depend on whether we attempt to immobilize our faith in concreted infallibilities or whether we believe that the tide of truth is the tide of God and in adventurous trust prepare to launch upon it.

There is guidance for theology to-day in a story of the British navy. The harbour of Apia, Samoa, " is unsheltered, and in times of hurricane dangerous in the extreme. The stark ribs and the rusty shell of the German war-boat, the *Adler*, lie there to-day in witness. In March 1889 there were several war vessels in the anchorage, and when it was plain that a great hurricane was blowing up, one, the English *Calliope*, got up steam and elbowed her way out, past the cheering Americans, into the full fury of the open sea. Pluck conquered, and new engines. Not one of the other vessels saw the end of the storm." * So in these days we must trust in ships and engines, that is in a living faith that can alter with the progressive alterations of human thought.

John Macmurray has set out the difference between " pagan Christianity," as he calls it, which seeks first and always for security upon a solid base of definiteness, and " Scientific Christianity " which has learnt the religious lessons of modern science.

> On the other hand, Scientific Christianity is sharply contrasted with this. " There is no authority," it says, " which can set its hallmark upon any doctrine or upon any observance. If you want to know what to believe about God, or how to serve God, we cannot tell you. We do not deal in security." To our ques-

* From my *Pastels from the Pacific*, p. 51.

> tion, "What must I believe?" this true Christianity can only answer, "Believe in Christ." To our question, "What must I do?" it answers, "Follow Christ." And if we insist . . . (being pagan by nature and training) . . . that we need guidance and authority, . . . the answer is that we cannot have it. Christ never offered it. All that this Christianity can do is to say, "Love Christ and live by His faith." Its doctrines are none of them certain, they are all working hypotheses with which it experiments, and which it hopes to expand and modify. It cannot even offer us an ethic, for in true Christianity there is no rule of conduct. There is an attitude of the spirit, the law of universal love. . . . If we want more we must experiment for ourselves. (*Hibbert Journal*, April 1926.)

Like Jacob at the brook of Jabbok the Church has been visited by a disquieting challenger of the night. He has called us to wrestle with him and we have been afraid. We have not had faith to understand that there is always blessing in wrestling with the angel of truth. At best we have wrestled half-heartedly. Never yet have we been passionate enough to say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Thank God, the disturbing angel has not given us up.

It was so in the days of Jesus. Then as now it was a period of upheaval and not least in the little country of Palestine. Greek, Syrian and Roman influences swept across its people. What changes of thought there must have been! But religion as represented by its official leaders changed backwards, if it changed at all. It was not that they had been uninfluenced,—of course they had not escaped the movement around them;—it was that in principle they had come to no conclusions with the new thought. They had not faced, with sufficient courage to confess it, the modifications which intellectual honesty was calling them to make. And so Jesus charged them with not reading the signs of the times. Can we claim that we have read better?

One thinks of our Free Church trust deeds and doctrinal statements, of our hymns about redemption from guilt by the blood of Christ, of the reversion during the war years to the Old Testament incitements to revenge, of our general failure to disavow in unmistakable plainness the primitive caricatures of God from which the prophets and Jesus tried to deliver the men of their own day. In the revision of the Prayer Book of the Church of England there is much to welcome, but that is mainly because we start from a posture of almost intolerable spiritual discomfort and even partial alterations bring relief. It is an advance to omit some of the less Christian portions of the Psalms, but how perfunctorily the revisers have done their work! To take two of the first examples, it can scarcely help people to comprehend the Father when they are set to sing:

> Desire of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance: and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.
>
> Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron: and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. (Ps. ii. 8, 9.)

> Up, Lord, and help me, O my God: for thou smitest all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. (Ps. iii. 7.)

Yet the Prayer Book does not give the option of omitting these! And are there words passionate enough to protest against the doctrine of Holy Baptism which can lead to the inference that children may be lost because they die unbaptized, even though they were too young to commit sin? That is the implication of the unaltered General Rubric:

> It is certain by God's Word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.

The Prayer Book is the result, slightly modified in later editions, of a formulation of worship which was made in

the reign of Edward VI and more or less standardized under Elizabeth. The compilers were induced by policy, and probably by affection, to retain much that came to birth at a cruder stage of Christian development, or like the imprecatory Psalms was thrown up during the pre-Christian search after God. It has not been effectively reshaped for nearly 400 years. Too much of our religious practice in the Free Churches is still under the same influences.

The man who wants to find where theology stands to-day is like an investigator examining a column of accounts in which he notices that several items have been corrected in pencil. But when he asks the clerk why the total at the foot has not been corrected, the clerk answers that there are so many items still to modify that it would be premature to alter the total. Yet the firm continues to quote the unaltered figure for public use! This item in our theological statement has been rewritten and then that; eternal punishment has gone and with it the damnation of the heathen, nature miracles have gone, atonement in terms of blood sacrifice has gone, we have largely erased the conception of God which gave rise to the demand for atonement, in our discussions of the Person of Christ we take pains to underline his humanity and devote a few ambiguous words to the divinity, no one on the liberal wing would stake his life on the doctrine of the Trinity, *and yet we continue to speak of Christianity in the aggregate as if it was unchanged*. At conferences like that of Lausanne * we somehow contrive to endorse the old creeds, very much as they stood. Yet have we the least ground for the assumption that the whole can be accurate while we disavow—is it not a majority?—of its component parts? Assuredly the revised figures in our page of theological accounts will not add up to the orthodox whole.

The first propagation of a new idea in religion must go through the same process of popularization as any new movement in politics or social reform. A book like *Human Nature in Politics* by Graham Wallas shows how the creative effort of a thinking minority will have no practical outcome

* World Conference on Faith and Order, 1927.

until it impresses the multitude sufficiently to make them accept the object of the minority as their own. To produce this impression you must resort to various forms of popular education, which depend largely on association, suggestion and herd-impulse. Some of these are so crude that only the partisan would venture to call them education at all. Most would class them as advertisement. But a measure of more or less irrational assistance is as essential for a good cause as for a bad one. True, a good cause must not depend too much on suggestion,—the less, the better. If the proportion of irrational to rational is large, sooner or later someone will call the bluff and the movement will collapse. Yet amid a mass of men many are unresponsive to pure ideas. Any attempt therefore to make a constructive idea generally dominant must use some methods which are not those of abstract reason. In this there is nothing wrong. Indeed even among philosophers there are fashions of thought (to which the herd-instinct must have something to say), while the sound prejudice "I would rather be mistaken with Plato" is obviously not rational. When the mass impulsion has done its work, the result is a "convention" in the good sense of the word, a general agreement which takes shape in epithets, battle-cries, songs, creeds and ritual. Every successful movement issues in such a convention.

The Christian convention embodies itself in the outward machinery of our Church life. Most Anglicans and Free Churchmen are what they are, not because of a compelling conviction, but because they were born in families of that type, because, that is to say, of association. The Church stands before us as a whole; its festivals, its characteristic architecture, its ornament, its crosses and statues, its hymns, its services and ritual, are at once the signs that the convention is accepted and the means of imposing it upon future generations. In an Anglican Church the carved font, the windows of the saints, the altar, the reredos all create suggestion; so does the uniform and flag of the Salvation Army; so in Churches barer of ritual do the gowns, pews and hymns, or the silence of a Quaker Meeting,

and the absence of a professional minister. The bond of fellowship between those who meet Sunday by Sunday reinforces incipient belief by personal ties. The pomp of a system with Church dignitaries and preferment and the subtler pomp of the popular Presbyterian or Free Church minister with one voice reiterate that the organization which offers such prizes is something to revere and obey. The orthodox convention is of immense extent and power.

To despise this is to quarrel with human nature. The same influences come into play for any political party, for a movement of the intellectuals or for the Russian anti-God propaganda. Every idea rakes to itself materials for its activity from other spheres than the rational, just as the germ in the seed assimilates alien moisture and nitrogen and the chemicals of the soil. Sow an idea and your work will prove its success when you reap a convention.

But for the continued value of the convention there is one condition, and here we part company with the illustration of the seed. The convention must always keep in living touch with its originating idea. If the idea perishes or radically alters, if, that is to say, the thinkers—always a minority—abandon the idea or greatly change their conception of it, the convention becomes a danger, a "convention" in the bad sense. Just as it takes long to build up a convention, so, when the truth is gone out of it, it takes long to decide to dismantle it. Meanwhile it is embodying more or less of falsehood.

Now in part at least this has happened to the great convention of Christian orthodoxy. Take our hymn-books. We have sections praising the Trinity, but since few, as I venture to think, find inspiration in the thought of the Trinity, the congregations must sing these hymns for the tune or for some secondary shade of feeling.* Again, a large number of hymns end with the promise of heaven as the climax and reward of our faith, or as the compensation for our sufferings in this vale of woe. Happily most Chris-

* All schemes of Church union I have seen insist on baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What purpose does the formula serve?

tians to-day find such wording unreal. Some well-loved hymns say much about the blood of Jesus. Yet few theologians would justify this emphasis.

Of ecclesiastical ornament we might speak even more strongly. In a college chapel in Cambridge there is a memorial window to one who did conspicuous service to criticism by a study of the Synoptic problem. The window contains figures supposed to represent the three Synoptists. But all alike are pictured as English Evangelical clergymen of 1875, complete with wavy beards. One might imagine that the designer had set himself to disguise the radical conclusions which must arise from the study to which this man had dedicated his life. Indeed ordinary Anglican architecture is so full of symbolism as to make it difficult for any but the most independent minds to resist the pressure to accept the creeds which inspired it. Many surrender to the symbolism. Those who cannot suppress their questions or who suspect that the idea underlying the symbols is obsolete, are driven into revolt and probably cease to come to public worship. In each of the Christian bodies a convention remains, but the idea which created it has altered or dissolved away. While that is even partly true, spiritual religion is in sore peril.

There is an important passage in William James' discussion of conversion in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

> A mind is a system of ideas. . . . The collection of ideas alters by subtraction or by addition in the course of experience, and the tendencies alter as the organism gets more aged. A mental system may be undermined or weakened by this interstitial alteration just as a building is, and yet for a time keep upright by dead habit. But a new perception, a sudden emotional shock, or an occasion which lays bare the organic alteration, will make the whole fabric fall together; and then the centre of gravity sinks into an attitude more stable, for the new ideas that reach the centre in the rearrangement seem now to be locked there, and the new structure remains permanent. (P. 197.)

This of course applies in the first instance to the mental system of the individual. But it applies with almost more force to such creations of the corporate mind as our theologies. " The collection of ideas alters by subtraction or by addition " is as apt for the changes in our theology as is the illustration of the " interstitial alteration " of a building. Could anything be more fitting for our present contention than the phrase " yet for a time keep upright by dead habit " ? It is by the force of dead habit that we continue to assert our doctrines after the destruction of half the data on which they were originally based. When a building has reached the condition of James' illustration, it is a danger till someone has the perception to take it down. It is the same with a theology. The more conservative will object that it is a mistake to destroy before you see how to replace. The compulsion of that argument depends on the view you take of the condition of the building. But in mental affairs there are abundant instances to remind us that the stimulus to positive creation may only be released by the destruction of a theory at present holding the ground. A negation is often the first step to elicit the positive we need.

This book is written in the conviction that, until we clear away the condemned building, we shall never get room for the new architecture which we plainly require. House-breaking is a dusty, risky, thankless task, and unimaginative watchers are impressed by the sense of aimless devastation. But without the house-breaker the proudest buildings of our great cities would never have had the place to rise. A modern city cannot justify its existence solely as a museum of antiquities. It is even possible that, as we clear away the rickety materials, we may discover some old treasure which " restorations " have overlaid. Perhaps we shall find more than one positive truth possessing a simple power, which the accretions of theology have only disguised. In any case the constructive thinker for the new time will be set free.

The metaphor of building is a happy one. For theology is an external thing, attempting as it were to house religion,

which is spiritual, and with more or less clumsy approximation to express in its architecture the character of its occupant. We need not fear that the tenant will suffer if the antique and inconvenient building is pulled down. There will be a period in which we cannot use some of the old phrases, because we are trying to find truer. Yet the religion of Christianity is too robust to suffer. The very challenge to its vitality will leave it stronger in the end. Later in this book we shall try to develop the idea that the Christian religion was always the same in its real essence. Its theologies have altered more or less mechanically, but it has grown by the power of an indwelling life. The writer of the Fourth Gospel foresaw it when he wrote, "Greater things than these shall ye do, because I go unto the Father." The same attitude is in his doctrine of the Holy Spirit the Comforter, who "shall lead you into all the truth," the truth you "cannot bear now." In an honest effort at restatement nothing is likely to be lost of the essential power of the Christian faith to bring men to God.

III

Summary

The natural affection for the Fourth Gospel obscures the verdict given by scholars against the historicity of its incidents and discourses.

(1) Unlikely that John, son of Zebedee, wrote it. (2) There is reason to distrust its history. (3) Almost all critics agree that the discourses come from the pen of the author and not from the lips of Jesus.

The Fourth Gospel differs from the Synoptic Gospels:

(*a*) In the style in which Jesus speaks.

(*b*) In the absence of any indication of development in Jesus' sense of his mission or the estimation others formed of him.

(*c*) In the claims to divinity made by Jesus and by others for him.

Other difficulties are found:

(*d*) In the attempt to remove the scandal of the Cross by showing that Jesus knew exactly what was coming and accepted it freely.

(*e*) In the polemic purpose of the references to the Baptist.

(*f*) In a hard division between black and white, good and bad, characteristic of one type of mysticism but not of the Synoptic Jesus.

(*g*) In a consequent separation between the ideas of man and God producing unreality in the representation of Jesus.

(*h*) In the emphasis on miracle as proving spiritual truth.

(*i*) In a confused idea of faith.

(*j*) In attributing to Jesus sayings and attitudes which seem to fall below the temper befitting a divine figure. Unfortunate results of this in Church history.

This Gospel, in some respects of a lower moral sensitiveness, is the Gospel of a heightened Christology.

The modern tendency to trace its ideas to certain contemporary sources does not really relieve us from the above problems.

A theory of the composition of the Fourth Gospel;—a series of meditative discourses written by the leader of a group and afterwards edited by another into a Gospel by the addition of a framework of incident.

Appendix A. Passages in the Synoptic Gospels which also suggest that Jesus early claimed a supreme dignity.

Appendix B. The Johannine and Synoptic use of miracles as proofs of spiritual truth.

III

THE HISTORIC VALUE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

As many of the defenders of traditional Christianity have emphasized, the Fourth Gospel is the most vulnerable of its fortifications. Where such a thought has awakened the mind to its difficulties, another thought is likely to arise :— how few have read it! Divines have quarried from its pages proof-texts of the great Christian doctrines; preachers have allegorized it; wayfaring folk by a process of unconscious selection have fed their spirits upon its more human and spiritual passages; and yet how rarely any of them have read it. It is not needful to ask that men should be trained in estimating historical documents, but only that they should bring a temper sufficiently unbiassed to put truth before affection. Yet with infrequent exceptions affection has won, and the mind of the ordinary Christian has received, not the text as it was before his eyes, but a record guaranteed by the Church's description and mentally adjusted to the Church's theology.

There is nothing surprising in the affection. The book has rare depth and power. The picture of the Son of God on earth seems at first sight so helpful to the teaching of the Church and so full of beauty. The mysticism, simple in phrase but profound in meaning, which takes the imagery ready to its pen, the Bread, the Water, the Vine, the Good Shepherd, has brought millions into fellowship with God. The Church Fathers called it " the spiritual Gospel," and though their judgment was sadly insensitive to certain of its elements, enough is left to justify the title. Some of the incidents peculiar to it are told with imaginative tenderness and dramatic force. Verse after verse is filled with that knowledge of the ways of God which gives light to the humble

and inspiration to the profoundest religious philosophy. The literature of all the religions of the world can find few parallels to the discourses in which its main lesson is variously developed, and it will always remain a manual of fellowship with God. Even while we criticize, we revere.

Among real students, however, there is sufficient uncertainty to put the reader on his guard. In any apologetic of the last thirty years it is common to find a sentence or two in which, as one taking no more than reasonable precaution, the writer puts aside the Fourth Gospel as a record of the life of Jesus and promises to draw his authority from the first three. This is frequent, if not usual, when the subject is the Person of Christ, the very subject to which the Fourth Gospel was dedicated. Why hesitate to use that document which is ostensibly the most essential? The answer lies in the doubt of scholars about the authenticity and historical accuracy of the book. For the general reader it is necessary to summarize the causes of these doubts.

(*1*) There are now few who would maintain that the book was written by the son of Zebedee. By a movement of opinion about 1920 which Vincent Taylor calls a landslide,* the mass of New Testament critics have united in distrust of that tradition of authorship.

It would be a mistake to lay stress on the isolated statements that John, son of Zebedee, was martyred in Palestine about the same time as his brother James,† but the saying in Mark x. 39 about their drinking the cup of Jesus and sharing his baptism does suggest that, by the time Mark wrote, the Church knew that both brothers had followed their Master to death. If so, that John was plainly not the author of a book which cannot be dated before A.D. 95 and may be half a generation later. Again, the Fourth Gospel here and there depends for its text upon the Synoptists.‡

* *Hibbert Journal*, July 1927.

† See Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, pp. 434 f. R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, I. xlv f.

‡ The term "Synoptists" is used of the authors of Matthew, Mark and Luke (and "Synoptics" for the books themselves) because, for all their differences, they take a common view of the history of Jesus. The majority of scholars now agree that Matthew and Luke adopted their ground-plan and much of their actual wording from Mark, which thus becomes of great importance. These

It is of course not incredible that an apostle should use words current in the general Church tradition, some of which may even have gained their currency through the phrases in which he himself had been wont to report the event; but it is not likely. The Synoptists drew upon composite masses of stories and sayings which the Churches had slowly accumulated and put into shape. Would not an eye-witness be too independent to copy these?

But the strongest argument against the authorship of the son of Zebedee, or indeed of any apostle, is the tone of the book itself. So careful a teacher as V. H. Stanton of Cambridge writes:

> Nor is the mental growth which must be assumed to have taken place in the evangelist, if he was one of the twelve . . . perhaps an *inconceivable* one. But is it *probable;* more particularly is it probable if John, the son of Zebedee, was the disciple in question? I do not think it can be held to be so by anyone who will duly consider the course of his life so far as we know it. (*Gospels as Historical Documents*, III. 280.)

It is possible that the Fourth Gospel preserves touches, perhaps even short passages, which come from an eye-witness, but in the main its feeling is more consistent with that of a disciple of the second or third generation, accustomed to worship the risen Lord and to picture him as sitting at the right hand of the Father. Many of the tendencies of the book which will come into prominence before the end of this chapter are not what we should expect from

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two also used a document (or documents) containing many sayings of Jesus, perhaps with a few short stories of action as well. This can be roughly identified by noting the places where the two coincide, though they are not following Mark. This second important source (called Q or less well the Logia) stands with Mark as the earliest of our authorities. It may be earlier than Mark. Then Luke had another document (or documents) often designated as L. The editor of Matthew had before him Mark, Q and a source he alone uses, to which we owe most of the matter peculiar to Matthew. This may be called M, though it may have been made up of more than one fragment.

See Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, or his article on the Synoptic Problem in *Peake's Commentary*.

one of the most intimate disciples of Jesus. Reminiscence is swallowed up by theology. It is unlikely that John the Apostle was the author.*

(2) Whoever the author, there is a widespread distrust of the Gospel as history. Its representation refuses to square with those of the first three evangelists. Upon certain important points where they diverge, the Fourth Gospel may be right and they wrong. For instance, there is much to be said for the chronology which extends the ministry of Jesus over three years (the Synoptists give no indication of more than a year), as also for times of preaching in Jerusalem of which the Synoptists tell us nothing. The Johannine dating of the Last Supper is probably correct. But it is not probable that Jesus cleansed the Temple at the outset of his public work, still less, as some reconciling spirits have suggested, that he did it twice. Again, we are bound to ask why the Synoptists, who give so much space to the last few days of Jesus' life, should have nothing to say about a miracle so dramatic as the raising of Lazarus.† The making of wine at Cana stands apart from nearly all the other miracles of the Gospels, for it serves no useful purpose and turns on a physical transformation which the modern mind is unlikely to accept. A few pages further on we shall examine other objections of a general kind. Here it is enough to say that the first seventeen chapters place the life of Jesus in a setting which seems to contradict the tone of the other three Gospels and that, though the latest chapters, telling of the trial and death, are more actual,—indeed they depend a good deal on the Synoptic record,—even there the author,‡ or his tradition, has embroidered the story to show that Jesus was master of every scene and that he deliberately chose to die.

(3) As for the discourses, the agreement of critics almost amounts to certainty. Hardly any would maintain that

* B. W. Bacon (*Story of Jesus*, p. 64) writes of "the unwarranted assumption that the author was an eye-witness of the events."

† Indeed the Synoptists tell the story of the march from Jericho to Jerusalem so as to allow little time for a lengthened and eventful visit to Bethany.

‡ In this chapter, as will be seen from its last pages, "author" must usually be taken to mean "author or editor."

Jesus spoke them as they stand in the Fourth Gospel. As long ago as 1902 so cautious and orthodox a scholar as Armitage Robinson wrote these words in his *Study of the Gospels* (p. 128):

> There are many who are heartily devoted to that central truth [the divinity of Christ], and yet cannot easily persuade themselves that the fourth Gospel offers them history quite in the sense that the other Gospels do, cannot think that Christ spoke exactly as he is here represented as speaking.

B. H. Streeter in his *Four Gospels* (Macmillan) has the following:

> . . . . the original readers of the Fourth Gospel would never have supposed that the author intended the speeches put into the mouth of Christ to be taken as a verbatim report, or even as a précis, of the actual words spoken by him on the particular occasions on which they are represented as having been delivered. They would not have supposed that the author meant that the doctrine propounded in these discourses was verbally identical with what was actually taught by Christ in Palestine, but rather that it was organically related to what Christ taught in such a way as to be the doctrine which Christ would have taught had he been explicitly dealing with the problems confronting the Church at the time the Gospel was written (pp. 370–1).

The first three lines of this quotation seem too strong. A few of those best educated may have allowed for the method by which ancient historians felt themselves justified in putting their own reflections in the form of speeches ascribed to their heroes. Ordinary readers, however, were not thus on their guard and, once the Gospel had found acceptance, the early Church treated its discourses as the words of Jesus. But the quotation expresses the opinion of most scholars that the discourses of the Fourth Gospel are not historic in the usual meaning of that adjective; they are

not, that is to say, a report, verbatim or approximate, of what Jesus actually said.

Streeter then goes on to construct a rather elaborate theory of the spirit of New Testament "prophecy" which might account for the composition of discourses and incidents on lines not limited by the bounds of strict history. He quotes in support a passage from Evelyn Underhill in which she suggests that the author may draw some of the speeches he puts into the mouth of Jesus from "auditive" experiences of the kind common among mystics. She continues:

> The lives of the later mystics show the astonishing air of realism, the bewildering intermixture of history with dream, which may be achieved in visionary experience of this kind; and which can hardly be understood save by those who realize the creative power of the mystical imagination, the solidarity which exists for the mystic's consciousness between his intensely actual present and the historical past of his faith. In his meditations, he really lives again through the scenes which history has reported to him: since they are ever-present realities in that Mind of God to which his mind aspires. . . .
>
> He sees this picture, in that strong light and with that sharp definition which is peculiar to visionary states. He has not produced it by any voluntary process: it surges up from his deeper mind, as do the concepts of the artist. . . . So real it is to him, so independent of his deliberate efforts, that the transition is easy from "thus it must have been" to "thus it *was*." (*Mystic Way*, pp. 235 f. Dent.)

This paragraph, with Canon Streeter's parallel attempts at explanation, is useful as sketching part of the causes which probably led to the writing of such a book, but it does nothing to reinforce the historical value of the Gospel. The transition may be easy from "thus it must have been," but to us it gives not the smallest guarantee that "thus it *was*." That is just where the rub comes.

In a careful study, balanced and documented at all points, Latimer Jackson sums up thus:

> When every allowance has been made for powers of adaptation and varied environment, it is impossible to believe that the historic Jesus was really accustomed to discourse after the manner of the Johannine Christ. The former lives and moves in the Synoptic Gospels; as for the latter, the human lineaments notwithstanding, he is pre-eminently the Christ of experience, the life of the Church (p. 82).
>
> . . . . a deposit of genuine reminiscences both of deed and word is embedded in it. It is however not, in the modern sense, a strictly historical record of the earthly ministry of Jesus . . . appeal must be made to it with cautious reservations. (*Problem of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 132 f.)

The reasons for these judgments we shall have to examine more fully. They are not exaggerated.*

* B. W. Bacon, deservedly the best known of American New Testament scholars, has the following:

> The compilers of our Gospels belonged to the pre-critical age. For them tradition and history were virtually the same thing. They took even less pains to sift report than the average ancient historian (and that was extremely little). Even Luke, who comes nearest to historical aims, was not primarily concerned to write history, but to defend the faith and teach religion. *The fourth Evangelist goes farthest in lofty disregard of mere matter of fact.* As Plato had said in speaking of the use of myth, the object sought by the Hellenistic evangelist is not fact but truth. If the hearer got at the religious truth, what matter whether the vehicle were fact or fiction? So reasoned the contemporary Synagogue in defining the limits of pulpit teaching. So reasoned Clement of Alexandria. So reasons our fourth Evangelist. *So, to greater or less extent, reason all our Evangelists.* (*The Story of Jesus*, p. 61. G. Allen & Unwin.)

The italics are my own.

R. A. Knox gives a more surprising estimate:

> The Fourth Gospel . . . we must use more charily. If we accept the tradition of its authorship, it seems probable that it was the work of a man in extreme old age, and the objector might legitimately question whether his memory was still accurate. Many modern scholars refuse to accept the tradition and would put the record outside the first century altogether. From its very nature it is a baffling subject of study. . . . I confess that it reads to me much more like the laborious reflection of a very old man, meticulously accurate about unimportant details, merely in order to show that he does remember them, and constantly forgetting what stage he has reached (as old men will) in the story or the argument. . . . In some of its main outlines it preserves an independent tradition. (*The Belief of Catholics*, p. 102. Ernest Benn.)

But for our immediate purpose what we are bound to emphasize is that the united Church has not learnt to accept this estimate. Indeed to tell an ordinary congregation in 1930 that much of the history of the Fourth Gospel cannot be received at its face value or even that the author, following the practice of Thucydides, probably put discourses into the mouth of Jesus which Jesus did not speak, would cause the disturbance of a sharp electric shock,—with a similar desire to take it out of the giver of the shock. Yet Armitage Robinson's book goes back to 1902. Meantime numbers of theological teachers and men in the ministry have held in suspense their judgment of the Fourth Gospel, while many have crossed the line of rejection. Though a portion of the blame for the Church's ignorance must rest with the listeners who hear little that they do not want to heed, the larger responsibility must lie somewhere in the hierarchy of the Church's instructors, from Regius Professors to Sunday School teachers. It is not worth while to fix it further; it must remain corporate. But we should condemn a barrister who quoted a document in good faith on the first day of a case, discovered that night that its genuineness was doubtful, and yet made no opportunity to disavow it on the second. Science again would not tolerate neglect of hypotheses so firmly grounded. Christian truth is surely as exacting.

It is essential therefore to study the Gospel for ourselves. The *prima facie* case is a strong one, as we have already seen.

The discrepancies between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels go far beyond detail like the earlier Jerusalem ministry or the date of the cleansing of the Temple, important as these may be. They belong to the fibre of the story. There is scarcely an aspect in which the first three Gospels correspond with the Fourth.

(*a*) The style in which Jesus speaks is different. In the Synoptics he uses parables. But the Fourth Gospel has no parables, at least none that can fairly be classed under the same word as those in the first three. In the Synoptics his sayings are short and pointed. When they are said, they

require no further development. Take for instance "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Such sayings can be found by the score. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus speaks long discourses in which, sometimes argumentative, sometimes meditative, he seems to go back in each sentence almost as much as he goes forward. The thought moves like a woman backstitching whose needle returns upon part of the material covered by the last stitch. Further, when we isolate and examine those reflective passages in which the writer is expressing his own thought in the first person, the style is practically indistinguishable from that attributed to Jesus. Such a passage is iii. 16–21, while 31–6 would be taken for words of Jesus but for the break between them caused by the story of John the Baptist. Again, the style of the prologue is identical with that in which Jesus is made to speak. This internal uniformity strengthens suspicions already awakened by the difference from the style of the Synoptics.

(*b*) Further, the Fourth Gospel allows no development in the personality of Jesus. While the chronology of the first three Gospels is not sharply defined, it does suggest some advance in the estimation of Jesus, as others formed it in their various ways, and not less an advance in Jesus' own conception of himself and his mission. But in the Fourth Gospel there is nothing of the kind. Once more we may quote Armitage Robinson:

> For a writer so trained and circumstanced the old standpoint is irrecoverably lost. The stages of transformation and transfiguration cannot be retraced. The growth has been so silent that there is no consciousness of change. The Lord is from the beginning what He is at the end. (*Op. cit.*, p. 154.)

It would be hard to dispute the last sentence. The Rabbi who spoke to Nathanael in the first chapter is the same as the Jesus of chapters xii–xvii.

(*c*) Closely connected with this arrangement of the picture is the claim to divinity made for Jesus by others

and by himself. On his first appearance others recognize him for what he is. John the Baptist identifies him at the outset (i. 29) as the Lamb of God, a semi-official title agreeing significantly with the theology which the Church developed under the influence of Paul and *as a title* indicating at least a generation after Paul. The only other book in the New Testament which uses "lamb" as a title is the Apocalypse.*

In i. 34 the Baptist goes on to designate Jesus as "Son of God," or if another reading be correct, "Elect of God." This was apparently done in public, and in the East a body of disciples would feel no obligation to keep to themselves news so startling. Nathanael (i. 49) exclaims, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel," while in verses 41 and 45 disciples announce to their fellows that they have found the Messiah. In iv. 42 the Samaritans said openly that Jesus was the "Saviour of the world," again using a title which coincides with the full-blown atonement theology of a couple of generations after Jesus had died. All the above testimonies come early in the ministry, and go far to justify Armitage Robinson's sentence:—"The Lord is from the beginning what He is at the end."

The Gospel represents Jesus himself as making the same claims. For instance, in i. 50 f. he not only accepts Nathanael's ascriptions "Son of God" and "King of Israel," but he promises him the vision of the angels of God communicating from the open heavens with himself, the "Son of man." In vi. 54 f. Jesus offers his flesh and blood as the means of spiritual life, and gives the assurance of resurrection to those who will partake. Owing to the probability that sections of the text have been displaced, it is beyond our power to decide accurately the period to which any chapter belongs, but we may be certain that chapter vi. is meant to relate events well before the final days in Jerusalem.

* I Peter is probably late in the first century and the phrase (i. 19) "with precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" is in any case a simile and not a title.

Plainly it was no part of the author's case that these ascriptions or claims were private. The opponents of Jesus know all about them and seek to kill him because he made himself equal with God. The challenge of xviii. 20, "in secret I spoke nothing," is without doubt the impression the author intended to convey.

Once these things are set down, it is impossible to ignore the gulf between them and the story as the first three Gospels conceive it. The Synoptists do not attempt a psychology of Jesus' own consciousness of Messiahship nor of the process by which the disciples came to greet him as Messiah, but they suggest in their unstudied way—

1. That Jesus did not teach any view of his own person which went beyond Messiahship and that others did not use higher terms in describing him. The only exception is the statements of unity with the Father (Luke x. 22; Matt. xi. 27), which will come under discussion later. This is too little to corroborate or justify the recurring statements and implications of the Fourth Gospel.

2. That he made no communication on his Messiahship to the disciples till the journey to Cæsarea Philippi (Mark viii. 27 ff.), nor to the public till the entry into Jerusalem.

Around this subject controversy ebbs and flows, for while this is the impression made by the general scheme of the first three Gospels, and the most natural reading of the history of Jesus and his closer friends, there is evidence which seems to contradict it. The passages are set out and discussed in Appendix A at the end of this chapter.

In the attempt to give them the meaning that Jesus assumed publicly the position of Messiah at an early date, the main difficulty is that it makes nonsense of his later questions, "Who do men say that I am?" and "But who do *you* say that I am?", of the disciples' answers and of his veto on publication. Yet on any natural reading of Mark those questions stand out as a crisis in the fellowship of Jesus with his chosen few. Whatever weight we allow, however, to the doubtful Synoptic passages in which, before Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus is supposed to lay claim to a unique dignity, no one who reads the Fourth Gospel along-

side the Synoptics will deny that such claims are not to be compared with the Fourth Gospel's reiterated assertions of the union of Christ with the Father, or with the matured theology on which it insists. Some apologists maintain that the divergence is simply due to the temper of the biographers and the consequent selection of their material. They quote the different portraits of Socrates drawn by Plato and Xenophon; not altogether happily, for it seems that Plato used the figure of Socrates to fill out more than one robe of his own weaving. But here we have divergence on essential fact which amounts to contradiction. Did Jesus give the rare, limited and guarded intimations of which the Synoptists speak, or did the Baptist recognize him publicly as the Saviour of the world, and from the first days of his ministry did Jesus himself claim and welcome homage as the Son of God? It is possible to accept either presentation. Our theological presuppositions will influence the judgment of most of us. But both it is not possible to accept. And which is the more probable, that is, the truest to the natural development of the humanity which all orthodox theology ascribes to Jesus?

Then there is the claim to pre-existence made by the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel. That is the plain meaning of viii. 56 and 58 as of xvi. 28 and xvii. 5 and 24. The author attributes pre-existence to him in xiii. 3. Nothing in the first three Gospels gives any corroboration to such a doctrine. Yet can we believe that the Synoptists, whose object was to portray Jesus as the Son of God, would have omitted proof so important if they had known it? Is it credible that Peter and the rest of the first apostolic group would have lost the chance of mentioning these soaring phrases? Why have they been forgotten in the early chapters of the Acts?

There are other matters in which one is bound to suspect the historicity of the Fourth Gospel.

(*d*) In several places the story seems to have been coloured by the desire to make a defence against those who ridiculed the Christian message because of the scandal of the Crucifixion. The Synoptists were sometimes influenced by the same tendency, but the Fourth Gospel goes far beyond

them. Its apologetic has two sides; first, Jesus foresaw exactly what was to happen to him and, second, he went voluntarily to his appointed death. Comparatively early he is aware that Judas "is a devil" (vi. 70), the good shepherd must lay down his life for the sheep (x. 11), the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die (xii. 24), he knows exactly what the traitor is about (xiii. 27), and in xvi. 32 he faces, with no tinge of disappointment, the certainty that his chosen disciples will scatter and abandon him to meet death alone. As for the foreknowledge, x. 18 leaves nothing further to be said. "I lay it (my life) down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This is the command I received from my Father." In xiii. 27 he sends Judas to arrange the arrest,* in xviii. 6 the troop of guards and soldiers falls to the ground at the majesty of his appearance, in xviii. 11 he will permit no resistance because he must drink the cup his Father places to his lips, while in xix. 11 Pilate would have no power over Jesus apart from sanction from on high, and Jesus tells him so to his face. It is in keeping with this that there are three official judgments of innocence (Luke has four), that Jesus takes charge of the cross-examination in the trial before Pilate and in the conversation during which Pilate searches for expedients to save the prisoner, and that throughout the death-story everything likely to impress the mind with the thought of divine dignity is emphasized and everything is removed which might suggest anguish of mind or perplexity. No doubt much of this is due to the Church tradition of the period,—it was not only our author who wished to have convincing answers to the objections of Jews and Greeks. If so, this points to a date by which such tradition has had time to grow and find official acceptance. Yet something is due to the apologetic tendency of the author himself. Of his delicacy and skill we shall have

* Johannes Weiss, *Aelteste Evangelium* (p. 292) suggests that the Church found difficulty in the Synoptic story in that it made no point of exit for Judas. This was unsatisfactory (*a*) as leaving the story incomplete and natural questions unanswered, (*b*) as implying that the traitor shared in the exclusive and sacred intimacy of the first Communion. The author of the Fourth Gospel provides the correction desired.

more to say. He chose his materials because they suited his purpose and not because they were forced on him.

(*e*) There are those who consider that the references to the Baptist are one section of the author's apologetic. When we remember the evidence of Acts xviii. 25 and xix. 3 for disciples of John in two unconnected quarters, it is impossible to rid one's mind of the impression that the references to John, beautiful as some of them are, may conceal a need for countering the claims of an opposing sect that John the Baptist was equal, if not superior, to Jesus.* Taken all together these passages suggest that the Baptist party was stronger in its menace to the Church than appears on the surface.

This suspicion is heightened by the Mandæan writings to which of late closer attention has been given. These are the sacred books of a religious community still surviving in small numbers on the lower courses of the Euphrates. They revere the Jordan, treat Baptism as an important rite, use for the faithful the title of Nāsōrāyē,† make much of John the Baptist (though there is only one mention of his name in their earliest collection), and regard Jesus sometimes as the Mandā d'Hajjé (*γνῶσις τῆς ζωῆς, i.e.* Knowledge of Life) and then again as a false prophet. There appear to be

* The words of Jesus, as preserved in Q (Luke vii. 28; Matt. xi. 11) at the end of his discussion of John's significance, show how great a figure John was :—"I tell you, among those of women born there is none greater than John." Then the verse surprises us by going on :—"yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Commentators have never been at home with this last sentence, and it may well be a sign of the need the Church felt to prevent the praise given by Jesus from serving the propaganda of a competing sect.

† Compare Noṣri, used of Christians by the Jews. G. F. Moore suggests that this meant the Jewish Christians as distinct from the Gentile Christians who came later to dominate the Church (*Judaism*, I. 91 f.). It was also the name of a Christian sect found in the fourth century round Aleppo and in Pella. It is the word for Christian in the Qur'an. It is not impossible that it corresponds to *Ναζωραῖος*, the word generally translated Nazarene, as if it were *Ναζαρηνός*. Matthew, John, Acts have only *Ναζωραῖος*, while Luke certainly has it once, and probably it should be read in xxiv. 19 also. In iv. 34 Luke uses *Ναζαρηνός* because he is copying Mark. Mark has only *Ναζαρηνός* (four times). Some scholars think that *Ναζωραῖος* means "Galilean" and not "belonging to Nazareth." Was the word used of the Baptist (so to be inherited naturally by his followers, among whom may have been the fourth century sect of Aleppo) and then carried to Jesus, who, as the story of his baptism shows, was at the outset associated with the Baptist movement?

close parallels with the phraseology and ideas of the Fourth Gospel, though these may be merely the figures natural to a mystical writer of the East. How are we to account for so obvious a dependence on Palestinian story? Brandt * attributes it to literary borrowing throughout and does not admit a personal connection with Palestine or a discipleship descending from John the Baptist. But it is not easy to believe that the agreements just described could arise by the arbitrary selection of some Mandæan scribe who was anxious to add something from Palestine to his jumble of theology variously derived. If the Mandæans were not in spiritual descent from the Baptist, what induced them to pick him out from Christian literature, where he plays so small a part, and to disparage Jesus whom all the Gospels represent as the greater figure? The rather conscious tone of the Fourth Gospel references to the Baptist has already roused the suspicion that the Church felt the menace of a strong "Baptist" propaganda. It met this by insisting that John was only the humble forerunner and in no sense a rival. This Mandæan literature now supplies an unexpected corroboration. If our guess is justified, the special emphasis with which the Fourth Gospel handles the testimony and the self-effacement of the Baptist is another instance in which the requirements of theological polemic have coloured its picture.†

(*f*) A careful reading of the Gospel makes it clear that the author, like certain other mystics, was one to whom all life was either black or white, with no shades in between. We can read his constant mind in iii. 36, "He that believes on

* *Encyc. Rel. Ethics.*

† Just before going to press I was fortunate enough to come across *The Lost "Book of the Nativity of John"* published late in 1929 by H. J. Schonfield. It quotes many traces of a belief in John the Baptist as Messiah and contains much further evidence that the Church found the "Baptist" propaganda a serious rival. It is true that the evidence is mostly in late documents, but the belief is so alien to orthodoxy and to the accepted Gospel history that there must have been a considerable earlier tradition to account for its presence. Schonfield proves, I think conclusively, that large parts of the nativity stories of Jesus in Matthew and Luke were adapted from a story of the nativity of John, in order to use for the Messiahship of Jesus a tradition originally supporting the Messiahship of John.

the Son hath eternal life. He that disbelieves (Moffatt 'disobeys') the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him!" Verse 18 is in a similar strain. The impression the Gospel gives of its author tones well with the tradition that the author rushed out of the baths when he heard that the heretic Cerinthus was in the building. It is the same all the way through. In human nature as he sees it there are no gradations. Judas is a devil, and the mistakes of the other disciples are minimized. The Jews are of their father the devil, and are set over against the true children of Abraham.

Now whatever form of literature you can write on the black-and-white theory, you cannot write history, least of all religious history. The first shall be last and the last first. The saints are pitifully fallible and the sinners every now and then refuse to act down to their label. Life is made up of greys that are struggling bravely to be white and other greys that slip and recover themselves and slip again into the mire below; but pure black and white are rare. The opposite view is as crude in psychology as it is limited in art.

But since the author is in the grip of the opposite view, it is inevitable that he should paint the picture of Jesus—including, remember, what he set out to portray above all else, the mind of Jesus—in the two contrasting colours which alone his box contained. We shall have occasion once or twice again to insist that an author's personal idiosyncrasy may make it impossible for him completely to understand the character of which he writes, and therefore impossible for him to write with essential accuracy. It was so with the Fourth Gospel. The quality of the testifier has affected the figure to which he testifies.

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus is not a human figure, that is to say, he falls short of humanity. True, it was among the author's objects to emphasize that humanity was one side of the nature of the Lord. Docetists who said that Jesus, when he seemed to do and to suffer like any ordinary man, was acting a divine but unreal part, and Gnostics who taught that just before the crucifixion another figure was slipped into the place of the Lord of Glory, had forced the Church

to find an apologetic. So it is that our author tells of the physical wounds, how they were made and how Thomas touched them, and of Jesus' weariness when he sat by the well. But for all his insistence he does not get the humanity across. Five years ago I was in Assisi when a strolling company performed what they called "The Drama of Christ." The general effect was impressive in its simplicity. But there was one unreality. The actor who played Jesus spoke the more emphatic of his lines, and even moved about, with two fingers up; it was the habitual Roman Catholic gesture of blessing. So in the Fourth Gospel, we might say, Jesus goes about with two fingers up. He never lapses into human forgetfulness of the deity with which the author, and prior to the author the Church, have invested him. His interest is in believers confessed or potential. For him as for the author life is black and white.

This is surely another grave disparity with the first three Gospels. Jesus, as these depict him, viewed life with patient, understanding eyes. The parable of the wheat and the tares might almost have been a manifesto against the black-and-white theory, and the story of the labourers engaged at the eleventh hour is a corroboration. The jingle which some attribute to R. L. Stevenson:

> There's so much good in the worst of us
> And so much bad in the best of us,
> That it ill beseems any of us
> To speak ill of the rest of us,

might have been written as a warning against the tone of the Fourth Gospel; and yet I can well imagine that, if the Jesus of the Synoptists had known it, he would have quoted it, partly for its humour, but also because it is really Christian. Jesus went so far in fellowship with publicans and sinners that his opponents called him a glutton and a drinker. It is hard to square the Fourth Gospel with this part of the life of Jesus. The publicans are not once mentioned and in its Synoptic sense the word "sinner" is never used. By the time our author wrote, the Church had settled down to represent Jesus in a different way.

(*g*) The black-and-white conception of course demands a sharp separation between man and God. In the last few years theologians of modern sympathies have pressed the argument that we should find it easier to accept the doctrine of the divinity of Christ if only we would realize how closely the natures of man and God are kin. It is an attractive argument, even if it will not bear all the weight that has at times been laid upon it.* But assuredly our author would not have tolerated it, much less made use of it. Jesus as the Son, the Saviour of the world, was not as men, and when the author mentions any of his natural human relations, he is always on the edge of the very Docetism he imagined himself to be opposing, which turned the daily life of Jesus into something like divine play-acting on the earthly stage. It is this tendency which leads the editor to twist the prayer of thanksgiving at the grave of Lazarus into a demonstration of Christology :—"Father, I give thee thanks that thou didst hear me. I indeed knew that thou always hearest me, but for the crowd standing by I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me" (xi. 41 f.).† The references to prayer in the Synoptic Gospels make it likely that the real Jesus would have recoiled from this conception of prayer as fundamentally irreverent.

There is the parallel passage in xii. 28–30, where Jesus in answer to his prayer, "Father, glorify thy name," hears a voice from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." Even to one as self-assured in his divinity as is the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel it must have been a rare, a moving, experience to hear thus audibly a message of approval from

* See pp. 267 f.

† This passage shows signs of incompetent editing. In 41 Jesus thanks God for hearing a prayer of which previous verses have said nothing. Most of 41–2 may therefore be the insertion of the editor, and it is possible that his original authority had a statement that Jesus prayed, which for a reason we do not know he removed in favour of our present text. One MS., Θ, with the Armenian version reads μοι ποιῶ instead of εἶπον ("I do it" instead of "I said it"). The reference then might be to the whole deed of raising Lazarus, and some may think that this relieves the difficulty of the saying. But is it any less unreal to raise a dear friend from the dead simply as a demonstration of a divine mission? Further, the sentence as thus read seems out of place at this stage in the story. See also p. 63.

the Father. Yet here too the author makes him wave it aside with the words : " This voice came not for my sake, but for yours." For himself he needs no such response from the Father, but for the crowd it will have a demonstration value. It is the same conception of deity which puts into the mouth of Jesus the explanation (ix. 3) that the blindness of a man from birth was not a judgment for his own sin or that of his parents, but was ordered " that the works of God might be revealed " in his person. But in this last quotation it is God that the writer misjudges; in the two previous it is surely Jesus.

The last two paragraphs find interesting confirmation in a reminiscence by A. J. Gossip :

> When the sermon came, my mind rose in revolt and passionate protest. It was on the three raisings from the dead, and the idea was that our Lord worked the miracles, not out of compassion for the mourners or the like, but because He needed—so we were told—" a peg " on which to hang some part of His teaching. When, for example, He raised the widow of Nain's son, the reason for the act lies in the words, " and He gave him back to his mother." Christ, it seemed, wished a chance of teaching us that in the other world we shall receive and know our own again ! . . . To me it seemed dishonest, and something approaching blasphemy. (*In Christ's Stead*, pp. 165 f. Hodder & Stoughton.)

That is the normal reaction of a religious mind to the suggestion that miracles of healing may be performed for demonstration or spiritual teaching or indeed any other motive than the compassion which desires to heal. Yet the preacher would have been justified in replying that he was merely extending the principle illustrated in John xi. 41 f. and xii. 28–30.*

(*b*) A natural connection leads to the author's insistence

* See p. 269 for a quotation in which R. A. Knox goes so far as to teach that the only satisfying explanation of the experiences of the temptation and Gethsemane is the value they had as a demonstration that Jesus was really human as well as divine.

on proof by miracle. The key words to this discussion are well known, "signs" and "works." To the miracles wrought by Jesus the Synoptists only apply the word "signs" in two sayings, and these are probably variants of the same incident.* In both Jesus refuses to provide the manifestation which his opponents demanded.

In the Fourth Gospel, however, "signs" are of great importance for faith. But we cannot be sure that the word means the same thing every time. In a third of the instances it means only miracle. In the other two-thirds some will read it as primarily expressing a message, a demonstration of spiritual truth by a concrete act of wonder. Yet for three-quarters of the instances of even the second division it is impossible to be confident of this symbolic and more favourable interpretation.†

The word "works" in the Synoptics never refers to miracles, except perhaps in Matt. xi. 2, "John hearing in prison the works of the Christ," a verse almost certainly inserted by the editor to introduce the story of the Baptist's doubt whether Jesus was the Messiah.

There are eleven places in the Fourth Gospel where it may have such a connection. Commentators have often attempted to dissociate it from miracle by explaining it as the total fruits which character produces in the shape of conduct, deed as the expression of personality. The actions of Jesus, they say, admittedly included miracles, but simply as the outcome of his love and not as exhibitions of power. An examination of the passages leaves little ground for this theory. Only five of the relevant uses will bear the sense of the fruits of character. Even these it is possible to read as referring specially to miracles. The other six simply suggest miracles and the wonder they cause. In two passages the author actually represents Jesus as distinguishing between believing in himself and believing in the works; in these it is evident that the works are not the expression of personality.

Without mentioning either "signs" or "works" the

* Matt. xii. 38 f., Luke xi. 29. Both refer to the sign of the prophet Jonah.

† For all the section see Appendix B following this chapter.

author in i. 48–51 connects belief with an act of external power. There Jesus elicits the confession of Nathanael that he is the Son of God by telling him that he saw him under the fig tree, a statement with a mystical significance we have not the data to discover. But it plainly has a mystical significance, for he continues: "Because I said that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. . . . I give you my solemn promise you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." While the abnormal power of seeing Nathanael under the fig tree is a legitimate ground for faith, it is less impressive than the marvels which the believer shall see as he travels further on the road of initiation.

The conclusion is that the Fourth Gospel frequently treats miracles as evidence for Christian belief and that, beyond the passages of which we may be reasonably certain, there are almost as many probable instances.

The Synoptic instances of a similar kind are not only far fewer than those of the Fourth Gospel, but, taken as a whole, their tone is radically different.* In the Fourth Gospel the signs and works are proofs leading men to believe in the Son of God, and to dedicate their lives to him. In the use of miracle as evidence of spiritual truth this book is in a different range of thought from the other three Gospels.†

The modern mind hesitates to attribute the most delicate moral sensitiveness to a writer who can set such store by miracles. The insistence on miracle, rather than on personality, as a cogent proof of the presence of the divine, belongs to a stage of moral immaturity. More than once Indian students have said to me: "If only I could have a vision of Christ, I would believe in him." They felt that the record

* See again Appendix B.

† Luke xix. 37 shows how before the date of the Fourth Gospel the Church was laying increasing stress on miracle, for it states that at the triumphal entry the whole body of disciples began to praise God "for all the works of power they had seen." At much the same point John xii. 17 f. say that the crowds gathered because the mass of eye-witnesses reported the healing of Lazarus. On the same day Matt. xxi. 14 makes Jesus heal blind and halt in the Temple after cleansing it. This is the tendency which we find fully developed in the Fourth Gospel.

of Jesus was insufficient without some clinching, some authentication, which from outside, as it were, should coerce belief. In this they were treading a well-worn track of Indian thought. Indian religious legend is full of the idea that the aim of "spiritual" discipline and development is to obtain power. Therefore any manifestation of abnormal power is easily accepted as the substitute for more personal arguments. The same is true of much undeveloped thinking. In discussing the divinity of Christ with a study circle in a South London Church, I found that three out of five members stated that Jesus was divine because he did miracles. Beyond that they had hardly a reason to give. Yet they were not babes in the faith and must have heard sermons by the hundred. Was I wrong to be a little shocked? The answer seemed to go back to that natural human tendency, so marked for instance in Islam, to identify Godhead with sheer, abnormal might. But is that tendency Christian?

(*i*) After this it is not surprising to find that the whole idea of "faith" is confused. In iv. 48 Jesus seems to rebuke faith in himself, if based on miracle, and in vi. 26 he seems to approve it,* while ii. 23 tells us that "many believed on his name, seeing the signs that he did," and then adds that Jesus did not trust himself to them, "because he knew what was in men." Plainly the belief was superficial. Yet the word is that which the author uses for the highest faith. The belief of "many among the rulers" in xii. 42 must have been of this same superficial type, for they allowed the fear of excommunication to frighten them into silence. In ii. 22 we have the curious statement that, when he was raised from the dead, the disciples remembered the words of Jesus about building a new temple, which the Evangelist refers to his resurrection. Then, and presumably not before, they "believed the scripture and the word which Jesus said." "The scripture" here must mean the general testimony of the Old Testament, as it was interpreted by the Church, to the fact that the Messiah would rise from the dead. Yet between the time of ii. 22 and the resurrection Jesus

* See Appendix B.

taught in explicit terms (v. 25 and vi. 39 and 40, 44, 47, 54) that he would raise those in communion with him from the dead, which surely must have involved that he would himself conquer death, and in v. 26 he says that the Father gave to the Son to have life in himself. There is a more puzzling incident in viii. 31–37, where Jesus accuses "the Jews who had believed on him" of trying to kill him, "because my word has no hold on you."

The explanation seems to be that, while faith by the nature of things is of several kinds and many degrees, the evangelist had only one word.* As suggested earlier, his mind did not readily notice kinds and degrees. The result is that the same word covers the imperfect faith noted above and the faith which rises to a perfect loyalty and ensures resurrection. For the richer uses it is sufficient to quote vi. 47, "He who believes has eternal life," that is to say, has it already in its fullness. No half faith could guarantee that.

(*j*) More serious is it that the Fourth Gospel attributes sayings and attitudes to Jesus in which it is hard for a modern to resist the feeling that he lapses from the temper befitting a divine figure. The historic Jesus has taught us a conception of God which was plainly beyond that of his time, and indeed beyond that of the Church in most of the centuries that have followed. Hence we make a more sensitive demand than did they upon the writer who would show us God incarnate. We cannot be satisfied to close our eyes to crudities in the drawing. Now some of the drawing of the Fourth Gospel is unmistakably crude. When we come to Chapter V, we shall discuss passages in which we are bound to question the effect upon the picture of the Father due to certain colours the Synoptists use for Jesus; but the main impression these Gospels convey of God is of a Father indeed, never surrendering His holiness and at the same time yearning over men with a patient, untiring love. In that love the sinner has his birthright, not less than the saint.

* He always uses the verb *πιστεύω* (believe) and never the noun *πίστις* (belief, faith). The adjective *πιστός* (believing, faithful) occurs once in xx. 27.

Many passages in the Fourth Gospel corroborate this impression, *e.g.* iii. 16, but others represent the Incarnate Son as speaking in a way that belongs to a more primitive interpretation of the divine character.

When Jesus in ii. 4 says, "Woman, what is there between you and me?" (Moffatt, "what have you to do with me?") it is not easy for the commentators to remove the sense that the phrase lacks much of courtesy,* as also in the answer to the nobleman, "If you do not see signs and wonders, you will not believe," for the nobleman, anxious for his dying son, has done no more than ask Jesus to come and heal him.† We may guess that there were circumstances unreported which led Jesus to say words which seem peevish and inconsiderate, but the point is that the evangelist left them unreported. He felt nothing inconsistent, nothing that should disquiet any reader. Jesus was Son of God, and that meant that he might speak as he liked. There is scornful challenge in v. 45, "Do not imagine that I shall accuse you to the Father. For accuser you have Moses, in whom you hope!" The intonation is that of a forensic quarrel:—"I need bring no evidence,—not that love forbids, but that the testimony of Moses is sufficient to get you condemned." Surely that is not the accent of the Father! Paul gave Moses a nobler function, that of the family tutor to lead men to Christ. It is impossible to be happy about x. 8, "All who came before me were thieves and robbers." Even of pretended Christs the words are hard. But they present so many perplexities that perhaps it is best to leave them alone, especially as the fact that a few MSS. omit "before me," may relieve us by suggesting that some more extensive textual corruption has been at work.

Even in the chapters which purport to repeat Jesus' last communications with his disciples, beautiful with an unearthly beauty, there are verses which jar. In the immortal saying about the vine some words ring with undivine aloofness; "if anyone does *not* abide in me, he is

* There is nothing discourteous in the Greek word for "woman," whatever our English may suggest.

† iv. 48. See Appendix B to this chapter.

thrown out and withered like a branch, which men gather and throw into the fire and burn" (xv. 6). Verses 22 and 24 bring us back into the law-court: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty (literally 'had sin'), but as it is they have no excuse for their guilt (sin)," and "If I had not done among them the works which no other has done, they would not have been guilty, but, as it is, they have seen and hated both me and my Father." The verdict has been given. The prisoners disappear below. In the high-priestly prayer (xvii. 12), there is the same frigid acceptance of the fact of evil and its predestined consequences: "none of them was lost except the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled." Can Jesus have minded so little about the fall of Judas or been content to write him off the disciples' roll with such a phrase?

When the Church teaches that in this human form was "God's Presence and His very Self, And Essence all-divine," it compels us to ask if in such sayings God is revealed or belied. Are we prepared to believe that God treats sinners like a counsel who has made the verdict certain, or shall we wish that the author had gone back to the first chapter of Isaiah and seen there another picture of God pleading before the bench of assize:—"Why will ye be still stricken that ye revolt more and more? . . . Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is God so concerned for the fulfilment of our poor human scriptures that He will calmly acquiesce in the price to be paid, the fall of a disciple until he becomes a "son of perdition"?

The eighth chapter has got further away from the God who spread out His hands all the day to a rebellious people, further from the God of Jesus, as the Synoptics show him. "I have told you that you shall die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am (*what I say*) you will die in your sins" (24), and to heighten it, our English versions have translated it "ye shall die," so as to suggest that it is a decision of the Son of God. "You are of your father the

devil, and the lusts of your father you choose to indulge" (44). "If I say that I do not know him (*God*), I shall be like you, a liar" (55). These are the worst phrases, but the whole of the wrangling dialogue falls short of the love that we associate with Jesus. Also, because it has little love, it fails in dignity.

Suppose that, as we studied comparative religion, we came upon similar phrases in the story of some great founder, Buddha for instance or Mahomet, what should we say? Would they not be classic in the attempts to value these religions, classic proofs that the religion linked with such sayings was imperfect in its revelation of God? If Confucius had so spoken, should we not count it against him as a sage? If they had been said by a later rabbi, should we not have written about the discourtesy the rabbis allowed themselves and decided that the hardness of their judgments disqualified them as interpreters of God? That the Church has not been sensitive to the pain of these passages is our warrant for concluding that it has not read the Gospel.

And yet in the past the Church has read these passages, read them perhaps too well. During the course of Christian history did this representation of the Christ feed the temper of hostility to the heretic and the opponent? Did its teaching that men were in or out, believers or unbelievers, abiding branches or fuel for the oven, justify the attempts to save their souls by racking their bodies, to remove the danger of sin's infection from the weaker brethren by cutting away the branch marked out for burning? Has it helped to stimulate the sectarianism which made men sure they were "in" and encouraged them for conscience' sake to ostracize the "outs"? Only one answer is possible. These results have indeed followed, and, unless the Church is clear in its repudiation of this picture of the Incarnation of God, they will follow again. That is what requires us to face a painful problem which the Church has evaded. It does not trouble me that Jesus spoke as he is reported,—that I ceased to believe twenty-five years ago. What seems really serious is that for want of explicit warning the rank and file of our Churches still continue to believe it. Sunday School

teachers stumble over these verses, and perhaps feel constrained to teach them with sinking hearts. Children read them at the age when they are asking what God is like. We are bound to say, and say plainly for all to understand, that this is not the revelation of God.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel* was a mystic and he had two of the typical faults of the mystic; he had an uncertain grip on morality in its more spiritual ranges and he was out of touch with human nature. His Gospel was a Gospel of love, but not to opponents,† that is to say it was not a Gospel of love to man as such. He did poor justice to humanity. And a Gospel which does not do justice to humanity as well as to deity is doomed to stay on a lower ethical plane. It is even disqualified from representing a genuine incarnation, since, if humanity is inherently unworthy, how can it be the vessel which God fills? For all the beauty of its picture of the communion of the soul with Christ, the Fourth Gospel remains in some respects upon a lower moral level than the Synoptics.

Now it is significant that this Gospel of lower moral level is the Gospel of heightened Christology. On this authority the Church has built. All the older arguments from the self-consciousness and the self-revelation of Jesus rest upon the Fourth Gospel, and in reliance upon it the Creeds were written. Even where modern theologians give the go-by to its evidence and base their argument on other parts of the New Testament, the Fourth Gospel provides the atmosphere in which their minds work, and still more the minds of their readers. It may take a generation to realize it, but, once we cease to accept its testimony, we upset the entire balance of the theological structure of the divinity of Christ.

Yet the only reasonable conclusion from the data examined in this chapter is that acceptance is no longer

* This may mean the original author, the editor—perhaps both—or the group for which they were the spokesmen (see pp. 62 ff.).

† Compare the Epistles of John (see pp. 143, 197).

possible. We can learn from it, from its good and evil, what the Church of about A.D. 100 found in Jesus and associated with him, but we cannot continue to use it (except within strict limitations) as an indication of what he did and said. To find a story of action in the Fourth Gospel is not evidence sufficient that Jesus or the others did so act; to find words ostensibly reported is not ground enough for assuming that they were really spoken. Until the Church has learnt this, some of us must go on repeating it.

Particular events in the Fourth Gospel may be sound history and under the discourses there may well lie sentences which Jesus said and ideas which genuinely derive from his teaching, but we shall accept them because they fit into the rest of the picture of Jesus, and not because they are found in this book.

The immediate problem is not radically altered by recent tendencies to remove the Fourth Gospel from comparison with the Synoptics into " the setting of Hellenistic religious thought of a Gnostic or neo-Platonic type." C. H. Dodd expounds these in a valuable paper printed in the *Congregational Quarterly* for October 1927. It would be out of place here to discuss the parallels with Philo and with the Mandæan or Hermetic writings. Whatever may have been its origin, any Mandæan evidence belongs to centuries after the Fourth Gospel. As for the Hermetic texts, the late Walter Scott in his careful edition dated them after A.D. 190–200. Here too, if he was right, there can be no borrowing by our author, but only the reproduction of those preliminary thoughts which later combined and hardened into literary form. A knowledge of Philo may have led to the use of " the Word " and " the Son of man." Yet I am not convinced that in phrase and idea the Gospel owes any literary debt to the influences which later crystallized as neo-Platonism. These influences were in the atmosphere, especially in the atmosphere which mystics breathed, and the author may have assimilated them as independently as Philo and the rest. Such parallels help towards an explanation of the origin of the Gospel and the associations of some of its favourite words: more than that they cannot do.

In any case Dodd summarizes the position by stating that this Gospel " tells us not what Jesus was on earth, but what he had come to be in the life, thought and experience of his followers." Also " We are not concerned to show that the metaphysical conceptions like Logos [*Word*] and Anthropos [*Man*], which the author may have brought with him into Christianity, are historically traceable to Jesus." In other words we must treat the Gospel not as history but as theology. The fact that the book purposed to set forth what the followers of Jesus had found him to be in " life, thought and experience " and " in terms of personal relations " to describe " the way up to union with God which is life eternal " does not justify us in treating its forms as historic, once scholars have shown that many of them do not correspond with historic fact. Still less can it condone the use of representations of Jesus as the revealer of God which are unworthy of the Father. The main contentions of this chapter are unaffected by any theory of origin.

It has been needful to bring out the places in which the Fourth Gospel appears not to deserve the confidence the Church has placed in it. A suggestion of the way it came into being may help us to do justice to its inspiration and positive value.

The author or editor was a Christian living probably about the turn of the century, a Jew by extraction, but acquainted with the ideas which arose from the meeting of the two streams of thought, Jewish and Greek. He did not live in Palestine but knew its geography because he had spent his youth there or had visited it in maturer life. There is little reason to doubt the connection of the book with the region of Ephesus,* and several difficulties are best explained by the theory that there was a school of Christian thinkers there, some of whom dwelt in the same range of ideas, used the same vocabulary and, consciously or unconsciously, learnt to write in a more or less unified style.

* If, however, we could find evidence that the churches of any region used the sacrament of footwashing in preference to a communion with bread and wine, or even alongside it, we should have a strong presumption that the Gospel had some geographical connection with this region.

That similarity of religious attitude may produce a corporate style we may see in the Synoptic Gospels. All three are alike in wording and cadence. Luke seems to have rewritten all his material with care; the editor of Matthew had plainly a conception of the story of Jesus which modified the way he repeated it, while Mark has his little arresting tricks of phrase. But all three tell a story or record a saying in much the same Synoptic style. Remember that we have the advantage of comparing the mannerisms of each of the three and becoming familiar with them. Yet probably fifty per cent. of their verses, taken one by one and in isolation, would still defy the attempt to decide their paternity on grounds of style alone. At the least we can say that each of the three evangelists clothed his story in a word fabric which resembles more than it contrasts with that of the other two. General unity of style is, therefore, not an overwhelming proof that a document was written by one man.

There is much to show that one hand did not write the Fourth Gospel. Not only do the passages which seem to be derived from the other three Gospels stand in a loose relation to the material amid which they are set, but several sections of the discourses read as if the author was inserting larger or smaller quotations from a previous writing. After a long interest in the Synoptic problem, I am convinced that the reading of the Fourth Gospel arouses far more frequent suspicions that the author is weaving-in portions of earlier documents than would ever occur to the reader of either Matthew or Luke, if only that one had survived and we had lost Mark. Just because comparison is possible, we can see that Matthew and Luke are composite—yet in either the internal evidence for this is far less than in the Fourth Gospel. In spite of the unity of style the Fourth Gospel, like a fabric of silks of varied origin, quality and colour, comes from several sources.

I believe that one of the Christians of this group, perhaps its leader, wrote a series of discourses to represent the salvation he had found through Christ and the subsequent life of continuous communion. Jesus as the "Word," Jesus as the

Bread of Life and the Living Water, Jesus as the Resurrection, Jesus as the Good Shepherd, Jesus in the other great simple representations which form the rich tapestry of the Fourth Gospel, had, as he was assured, thus spoken to his soul. This man was supreme in the records of mystical religion. Many of the sentences he wrote are without parallel for the penetration of their psychology and moral teaching. Yet this judgment is swallowed up by the more powerful impression of the profound finality of their religious insight. But he was not thinking in terms of history or wanting to write it. Like the rest of his school, he saw religion in terms of black and white, in sharp antitheses between goodness and evil; he did not visualize the opponents as actual human beings; when he smote them, it was as types of evil tendency and not as individual sons of the one Father.

Then someone set his hand to make these meditations into a Gospel of the kind which was becoming standardized by the vogue of the earlier three. This involved fitting each meditation into a ground plan of incident. Perhaps the motive was the desire to do for the "meditations" what Matthew and Luke had done for Q and those other sources which Streeter may be justified in designating as L and M. Perhaps the school, profoundly convinced of the importance of broadcasting the experience of their saintly leader, were disappointed that his book had not "caught on."

It is barely possible that the editor was the same as the author of the "meditations," but it is improbable. The original author would hardly have broken up the discourses into the fragments in which they now appear, or have been satisfied with some of the connecting passages or have fallen into one or two of the rather obvious traps which Christian tradition laid for the compiler's unwary feet.* It is more

* Instances are ii. 21, plainly due to misunderstanding, and v. 33 f., where, though Jesus uses for his argument the testimony the Pharisees had secured by sending to John the Baptist, the editor feels bound to maintain the glory of Jesus by putting into his mouth the continuing words, "But from man I do not accept testimony, but I say these things (*i.e.* mention the result of your inquiry) that you may be saved."

likely that we owe these characteristics to an editor as also the artificial changes already mentioned by which he accents the supernatural features of the story of "the Lord." We see the same tendencies exaggerated in the apocryphal Gospels. But, in spite of occasional mistakes, the editor's mind was subtle, he produced his ensemble by quiet emphasis and almost unnoticed suppression, and many of the touches which seem most insignificant were consciously added in order to build up an effect for which he sought. He had a clear picture of the effects he thought it important to create. The whole treatment of John the Baptist is one example, and another is the reshaping of the Second Coming expectation as the assurance of the indwelling Spirit. For his incidents he went in part to his memory of the Synoptic Gospels, in part to traditions which had accumulated in the school, in part perhaps, though I think rarely, to his own invention. Following the mystical philosophy of this group, he chose only those incidents which might serve to give concrete illustrations of the spiritual truths that were the subjects of the meditation. To fit the incidents and make a connected narrative he broke up and pieced the "meditations" much as the author of Enoch* broke up and pieced the earlier documents which he inserts into his visions. That he was not always successful and that the narrative did not always "connect" is shown by the present state of the text and such plausible alterations as Moffatt puts forward in his translation.

If there is probability in these suggestions, it is clear that the editor modified the whole tone of the discourses by turning them into a biography. The statements of a spiritual conflict between good and evil become harder and harsher when related to definite groups of argumentative Jews. The first teacher, himself to some extent a controversialist against heresy, could not always break free from surrounding trammels; ever and anon he failed to keep his grasp upon Christian standards, but in the main he wrote with eternity in view. When the editor brought the thought down from eternity and reset it amid so-called his-

* See p. 163.

tory, the phrases took on a different meaning, and the atmosphere turned bitter, as in a persecuted Church. When Bunyan puts into Christian's mouth the reply to Mr. *Hold-the-world*, "To answer the question therefore affirmatively, as I perceive you have done, and to accept of as authentick such answer, is both Heathenish, Hypocritical, and Devilish, and your Reward will be according to your Works,"* he rouses no scruple in the mind. But if we found that he had used these same words to an acquaintance on Elstow Green, we should feel that he had fallen below his Christian profession. Mysticism like allegory may enjoy a certain licence as long as it keeps away from actual flesh and blood, but when it claims to play a part in the real world, it must hector no more. The editor lacked the sensitiveness to perceive this. For him opponents were all wicked and believers were all good, and he had no hesitation about the tone in which Jesus must have addressed them.

Whether we accept or question this explanation of the causes that gave us the Gospel of "John" in its present form is not after all of great moment. The explanation is an attempt to account for facts in the text and feeling of the Gospel from which it is hard for the modern reader to veil his eyes. Those facts still remain. What is important is that they leave us with the duty of discriminating the passages which embody a genuine experience of the divine communion from those which will lead us astray if we continue to accept them as the revelation of God.

When we have fulfilled that duty, we shall be free to give the value they deserve to passages which transcend all other literature in the tenderness and insight with which they show the way to communion with God.

* *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 116, Golden Treasury edition.

APPENDIX A

PASSAGES IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS WHICH ALSO SUGGEST THAT JESUS EARLY CLAIMED A SUPREME DIGNITY

Mark pictures the dæmons as at once acknowledging Jesus. Their phrases, " Holy One of God " and " Son of God most high," may be only the Oriental way of describing a dominant personality or, more likely, may represent what the Church thought beings of dæmonic second-sight would at once recognize in Jesus. When, too, he was questioned about fasting, Jesus compared his disciple group to the bridegroom's companions and himself to the bridegroom (Mark ii. 18–20 and parallels). Apparently the answer was public and the disciples should have understood it, even if the opponents and the crowd did not. As it stands, it can only have a Messianic reference, which included a prediction of the Cross. Yet in viii. 29 Jesus makes his great revelation of Messiahship, seemingly for the first time, and there explicitly confines it to the disciples alone. The explanation may be either that the Church has worked up a simple saying about the glad fellowship of Jesus and his followers into a statement of Messiahship or that Mark has put the section much too early. If the incident was after the death of John, there might be a hinted contrast with John's disciples who had lost their " bridegroom." Some think that the whole is composed to justify the practice of Christian fasting (see *Teaching of Twelve Apostles* and quotations in Rawlinson, *Mark*), but it seems unlikely that it had no foundation in actual history.

Again, to the envoys of John Jesus gives evidence that he is " the coming one " (Luke vii. 18–23; Matt. xi. 2–6). Though this story is drawn from Q, it has elements which it is hard to attribute to Jesus. The catalogue of activities of mercy is like that which Matthew assigns to the disciples on their preaching mission (x. 8); it has the ring of a conventionalized description in Old Testament phrases of the powers associated with Jesus and the disciples in the later thought of the Church. Did Jesus assert in general terms that he raised the dead? Luke increases the feeling of conventionality by inserting a statement that Jesus held as it were a clinic of healing before he gave his answer.

A doubtful instance is the preaching at Nazareth as Luke relates it (iv. 17–21). This probably comes from Luke's special source,

often marked as L. Jesus there uses of himself a prophecy about the "servant of Jehovah" in Isaiah, which may be interpreted as a claim to the type of Messiahship which Jesus was to teach, or may only be a vindication of his claim to be a prophet.

In any case this story is badly out of place, for it stands at the opening of Jesus' ministry and speaks of miracles done in Capernaum of which no mention has been made.

Even if all these instances are beyond question, they fall far behind the explicit Christological statements of the Fourth Gospel, all referring to the beginning of the ministry.

APPENDIX B

THE JOHANNINE AND SYNOPTIC USE OF MIRACLES AS PROOFS OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH

See (*b*) pp. 51–54.

Sign (σημεῖον).

A. The Fourth Gospel uses it *fifteen times in* what purport to be *the words of the author or of speakers other than Jesus;* five times it means miracle and nothing else (ii. 23, vi. 2, vii. 31, xi. 47, xii. 18). Three or four of these refer to the impression made on crowds. Ten times (ii. 11 and 18, iii. 2, iv. 54, vi. 14 and 30, ix. 16, x. 41, xii. 37, xx. 30) it *may* be 'symbolic act,' though it is often more likely that the main interest is in the thought of miracle. I confess I find the distinction a fine one.

B. *Twice* the author puts the word *into the mouth of Jesus.* In iv. 48 Jesus rebukes the nobleman for expecting "signs and prodigies" (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα). This is quite contrary to the general use of the Gospel, and indeed six verses later the author calls this very healing a σημεῖον. But the passage has a ring of petulance for which the introductory story fails to account, while iv. 47 contains words reminiscent of Matt. and Luke, so that the whole may be abbreviated from an earlier tradition in which this rebuke was in place. If so, the author has carried over the phrase disparaging signs, without noticing the inconsistency.

In vi. 26 Jesus contrasts the folly of coming for loaves with the rightness of coming for "signs." Here the word is probably symbolic; it is right to come for spiritual food.

The inconsistencies in the use of this word may be one more proof of the composite character of the Fourth Gospel.

Work (ἔργον).

There are eleven verses where the word might have some relation to the idea of miracle, all in the plural but one (vii. 21). All but one too (vii. 3) are in the words which the evangelist reports as the words of Jesus. Of the eleven, six definitely suggest miracle and the wonder it causes (vii. 3 and 21, x. 37 f., xiv. 11 f.), while x. 38 and xiv. 11 actually distinguish between the impression made by Jesus and that made by his "works." The remaining five (v. 20 and 36, x. 25 and 32, xv. 24) perhaps use the word to describe actions arising out of personality and revealing it. From most of these verses the thought of the Father as revealing Himself in Jesus is not far away; the "works" are indications of His presence in the Son. Yet it would not be safe to exclude from these five instances a special interest in the "works" as miracles of abnormal power.

It may be objected, however, that the Synoptists treat miracle in the same way. There is no denying that these do represent Jesus as making use of proof by miracle. In Matt. xi. 21–24, Luke x. 13–15, probably from Q, he reproaches the Galilean cities because the sight of the works of power (δυνάμεις) done in them has not brought them to repentance. We owe to Q also the parallels in Matt. xii. 27 f., Luke xi. 19 f., where Jesus, after laying stress on his ability to cast out devils and comparing it with that of the Jewish exorcists, goes on, "But if I by the spirit (Luke—finger) of God cast out devils, surely the Kingdom of God has burst upon you." From Q come Matt. xi. 4 f., Luke vii. 22 f., where Jesus bids the disciples of John go back and tell their master "what you hear and see; blind men get back their sight, lame walk, lepers are cleansed, deaf men hear, dead men are raised, poor men have the good news preached to them: and blessed is the man who finds nothing in me to repel him."

Probably the central idea fell from the lips of Jesus, but the difficulties in reading the passage as historical were discussed on p. 66, as also the preaching at Nazareth, in which (Luke iv. 23) Jesus seems to suggest that the Nazarenes might legitimately challenge him to prove his prophetic right by miracles. For the reasons given we can rely on neither passage.

In the story of the paralytic let down through the roof (Mark ii. 10 and Matt. and Luke parallels) Jesus uses the healing which men can see to press home the reality of the forgiveness which they cannot see. Here the interest is not in proving by miracle his own

uniqueness, but in the general right to declare the forgiveness of sin (see p. 242).

The remaining passage (Mark viii. 17–21, Matt. xvi. 8–12), in which Jesus seems to rebuke the disciples for not being sufficiently impressed by the feeding of the multitudes, evidently belongs to the later portion of Mark's sources, for it refers to the feeding of the 4000, which is a later reduplication of the feeding of the 5000. Also the whole passage is so awkwardly connected and so obscure in meaning that it can justify no safe deduction.

Thus the first three passages alone are relevant for our comparison as against the many in the Fourth Gospel. In two of the three Jesus treats miracle as a proof that the Messianic Kingdom is at hand; in the other, if we can trust its wording, he wishes to persuade his hearers and John that he is the Messiah.

Even if we allow all these passages, the Synoptics use miracle to establish spiritual truth far less than does the Fourth Gospel.

IV

Summary

The Church's debt to the Synoptic Gospels for the sanity with which they refrain from adjusting their history to their theology. Nevertheless there was a measure of adjustment; Matthew and Luke prove this when compared with Mark.

(Criticism of miracle not due to a dislike of the supernatural. The relation of the two personalities, God and man, must inevitably transcend natural law. But in spheres outside personality the belief in natural law makes us demand incontestable evidence for any story of miracle.)

The Birth stories, only found in Matthew and Luke, appear unknown otherwise to the New Testament. The two are not mutually consistent and, though such an event could not have been kept secret, the rest of the Gospels shows no trace of knowledge about it. Historically the evidence is not to be trusted.

The stories of the Resurrection have parallels in the Fourth Gospel, Acts, I Cor. xv. and in what we can infer of the lost ending of Mark. The inconsistencies among these, together with certain improbabilities, show that, whatever great event lies behind them, the details of the Resurrection story will not stand the test of history.

Passages in which Matthew and Luke appear to have modified Mark on theological grounds.

Was Mark immune from the same tendency? The time before Mark was written was ample for legendary expansion and covered just the stage at which there would be the strongest incentive to it. An earlier date for the Gospels makes little difference. The first opponents would criticize the main thesis of Christianity, not its historic data.

In some of the traditions Mark allows to pass he too shows credulity in his use of evidence.

The rapid expansion of belief in any period of emotional tension. From such influences Mark was not immune.

IV

HOW FAR MAY WE TRUST THE SYNOPTICS?

If the Fourth Gospel can no longer be treated as the main buttress for the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus, what have we left to support the fabric? In old buildings an examination of the pillars has sometimes shown that one among them had been built for ornament, and, so far from bearing any weight itself, added something to the strain on the rest. Similarly it has perhaps appeared that our view of the divinity of Jesus might actually be strengthened, because purified and humanized, when we ruled out the evidence of the Fourth Gospel. Yet we cannot be content with a vague impression. We must test the pillars remaining. Are they of material sufficiently coherent, are they founded with sufficient firmness to carry the load? What of the rest of the New Testament?

We will take first the three Synoptic Gospels.

To a remarkable degree the Synoptic Gospels have escaped the impulse to make their history conform to the theology of the Churches for which they were written. When we read Paul's exaltation of the Person of Christ, or meditate on the rich imaginative Christology of a book like Hebrews, we are surprised that the authors of the first three Gospels were continuously proof against the temptation to write their history to correspond. We call to mind, too, the crude excrescences of the Apocryphal Gospels and learn from them, as from the literature of other religions, what kind of inflation is to be expected when the historical conscience is asleep. If the first three Gospels felt in some measure the influence of the contemporary worship of Jesus upon the report they gave of his earthly life, how fine a restraint they showed in the materials they accepted, how fine

a respect for ancient but intractable traditions which fitted so awkwardly into the theological scheme of their generation!

Again, the very existence of the Gospels is more remarkable than we commonly remember. The Pauline Epistles were written before any date we can reasonably assign to Mark. These show the Church far advanced in its devotion to Jesus as Christ the Son of God and at the same time give pause to the modern reader by the degree to which they neglect his earthly experience. Plainly it was the massive ideas of Incarnation, Redemption and Resurrection that drew men like Paul into the Church and filled their thought till the day of death. Yet in the Synoptic Gospels we find three sane and, for that age, competent biographies. They represent a throw-back to a natural, human interest in the details of the life of the Master without which we should be poor indeed. Granting that we want to know more, and that in proportion to our desire the material is tantalizing in its brevity, granting too that the subjects Jesus handled and the significance of his personality are of such magnitude as to reduce the short statements of our authors to hints of which we are driven to make our independent best, still, how thankful we ought to be that we have so much. In contrast with our knowledge of other figures of the period, especially those who lived away from the academic centres, or of the founders and leaders of other religions, what we know of Jesus is more than moderately complete. The world owes, perhaps, its greatest literary debt to the authors' initial impulse to write and to the restraint with which they told their narrative. The spiritual debt is at least as unique.

The explanation of the apparent paradox of the origin of the Gospels is that the Epistles create an impression somewhat out of perspective and that alongside the local groups concentrating their main affection upon the risen Lord and careless of his actual story, there were other groups as important whose members treasured every reminiscence of Jesus as he was on earth. To the groups of this second class belonged those who by word of mouth and by writing helped to accumulate the material which our three evangelists put

into its present shape. Many no doubt shared the interests of both classes. In using therefore any such phrase as "throw-back," we must not understand it of time, for probably this bent towards biography was active quite as early as the first Epistles, but rather as meaning an escape from that trend of the Church's thought which dominates the latter half of the New Testament. The desire to know what Jesus did and said in Galilee and Judea, how he drew his disciples round him and how he died, was strong enough to preserve the Gospel treasure.

It is impossible, however, to regard it all as treasure of equal worth. Like the Fourth Gospel, though in less degree, the Synoptic Gospels also reveal traces of legendary amplification and above all of the intensification of the phrases which bear out the Church's theory that Jesus was God the Son.

The first and most obvious evidence comes from the comparison of Matthew and Luke with Mark. It is now firmly established that Mark supplied the other two with their skeleton and with a large mass of their narrative material. If, then, we examine the modifications with which these two reproduce Mark's wording, we shall learn something of their method and temper. We discover that at many points Matthew and Luke exhibit an unmistakable growth in the miraculous element and in the tendency to shape the history of Jesus and his disciples rather closer to the theological conception of the day. Of course it does not follow that every alteration from the Marcan text in one of these derived Gospels is a case of the development of legend. But when a series of alterations seems to make the miraculous story a little more miraculous and the picture of Jesus a little more "divine" in its difference from ordinary humanity, it is not unnatural to infer that the belief of the early Church has expanded the tradition committed to her charge.

But we must turn aside for a moment to ask what attitude we ought to adopt to stories of miracle. Here or at a later point someone is sure to object: "You are prejudiced against miracle and you reject *a priori* every narrative

of a miraculous kind." That objection is frequently urged from the orthodox side. It supplies the substance of some vigorous pages of Gore's *Can We Then Believe?* Such prejudice is always possible, and yet I do not think that it is the main cause of our distrust. The word "miracle" is ambiguous, and for this and other reasons it is out of the question to discuss it fully here. But it is surely axiomatic that every Christian has a certain belief in miracle which, even if restricted in range, is still most important in the intensity of its sway. Streeter has pointed out in *Reality* that individuality is no fit subject for the quantitative measurements of science, and he is right in applying the argument with even greater force to that individuality which we call personality. There seems to be an element in personality which enables it to stand over against natural law, instead of being controlled by it, and to direct natural law to its own ends. The very essence of individuality and personality is something which refuses to be accounted for by classification or explanation, something which exists in its own right and operates by its inherent power. If therefore religion is the relation of persons with the supreme Person, the ordinary categories of natural science are doubly irrelevant. For the meaning of the personality of God is that His action is invariably marked by a spontaneity which, without violating law, treats it as the instrument of His purpose and therefore stands in some degree outside the sway of its rigidities. On man's side there is a similar idiosyncrasy and he too is free to choose between two sets of law and so is not the passive tool of either. Thus all God's dealings with His children are "miraculous" in that they arise from a personality able to make law serve His purpose, while the recipient shares the same quality in a less degree. We can corroborate this for ourselves. Many a Christian can echo the testimony of R. W. Barbour, "I have walked knee-deep in miracle." That sense of power springing everywhere is an important part of faith.*

* "I do not hesitate to say that the conjunction of something preternatural is essential to devout faith: and that without miracle there is no religion."—Letter to a Minister in Doubt, 1842. Martineau.

In this matter we still see as in a glass darkly. It may be that future ages will discover so much of God's methods with those created in His image as to classify and sum them up in a regulated system. But I doubt whether this will ever come to pass. By its very nature the communion of God with men involves an interplay of personalities which stand above the normal experience of causation.

Yet in most of the spheres outside that of personality we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the advance of science has established a series of observed uniformities, which in racial memory have never been broken. In face of one of these uniformities, which we commonly call "laws," the man of science will not deny the possibility of any particular miracle, but he will require evidence compelling enough to justify him in upsetting the conclusions of all the previous observation of thousands of trained minds. We do not hold that things beyond our understanding, or even beyond the memory of the race, are impossible, but in each case we are bound to ask: What is the evidence and has it the strength to establish what seems to be a unique instance of variation?

We reach much the same result when we look at miracle from the standpoint of religion. Champions of orthodoxy believe that they clinch the argument when they retort: "Is there anything God's power cannot do?" The question should neither be asked nor answered by the genuinely religious mind. What God can do will always be what is consonant with His goodness to do, and the contemplation of His character will always give us better guidance than any logical deductions from His power. Therefore, to each claim we are driven to apply the test: Is this arresting story in accord with our picture of God? Would He be likely to act thus? Hence the quality of our trust in miracle alters with our view of the character of God.

In fact at one time or another all Christians exercise the right to reject a story of supernatural intervention. The Fundamentalist supporter of the inerrancy of the Bible, who is confident that the whale swallowed Jonah and the sun stood still, will rarely be credulous enough to accept the

Roman Catholic miracles, either mediæval or modern. Roman scholars in their turn have been at some pains to discredit the more startling incidents in the biographies of Sadhu Sundar Singh. In these days, unless we have some theological prepossession, we invariably regard a claim to miracle as a guide regards a crevasse on a glacier. It is a point of danger to skirt or, if he crosses it at all, to cross with care. That being so, we are not justified in making exceptions of the miracles of the New Testament.

When therefore we come upon the miracles of the Synoptic Gospels, they challenge us to ask: Is the evidence good enough, free enough from tendencies to turn the narrative in a supernatural direction, near enough to the time of occurrence, vouched for by enough witnesses of independence, to create a presumption that this miracle did happen as related? If the story satisfies these preliminary conditions, we shall then try to decide whether all our previous observation has been mistaken and in this lonely instance a factor hitherto unidentified has been at work, a new datum on the basis of which science will have to redescribe the uniformities it thought it had established. If there was such a factor, then whenever it is again present under similar conditions, we shall obtain the same result. The only other explanation is that on this one occasion God of His omnipotence intervened to break a uniformity observed everywhere else and apparently ordained by Himself. Suppose, for example, that we incline to admit the proofs for the feeding of the five and four thousands, we must choose between two alternatives: (*a*) that twice in recorded human history God thought it consistent with His character to multiply food in this abnormal fashion, or (*b*) that Jesus was making use of some unknown but natural power by which, if we could discover it, we too could feed thousands as often as we wished. Was Jesus only putting into operation a higher "law" than that by which in common experience the multiplication of food has been governed?

It only throws the question back again to answer that Jesus could do this because of the uniqueness of his personality. If we mean a uniqueness within the range of man's

power to grasp, then other men may fulfil that condition. If however we understand by the phrase that he was the Incarnation of God as none else has been or ever can be, then to say that this qualified him to feed five thousand people with five loaves and two small fishes is to say that such an act is characteristic of God's nature, indeed that we recognize the divine in an act which upsets the uniformities we have observed. A God of this character comes suspiciously near to the "spirits" as animists conceive them, spirits aiming the shafts of their power with inexplicable caprice.

The summary of this short discussion is that, whichever of the two above alternatives we adopt, any story of a nature miracle puts such a strain on our thinking as to demand that we re-examine the documents to discover whether the evidence is absolute to the point of coercion. It rarely is. To take a concrete case, how many of us do believe that Jesus fed the multitudes by a multiplication of bread and fish? When the question is pressed, many who read the story in church would have to admit that they regard its present form as legendary, and the evidence as insufficient. So with every miracle,—our first concern is with the evidence. Is the evidence good enough?

We can now take up the suggested scrutiny of Matthew and Luke to see how they differ from Mark.

At once we notice that as compared with Mark both are extended at either end by narratives of the birth of Jesus and his resurrection.

First, the birth stories. Remember that we have no others but those of Matthew and Luke. Not only so; in the whole of the rest of the New Testament there is no reference to these stories. The editor of the Fourth Gospel must have known them, yet he passes them coldly by, either because he did not credit them or because his own view of the central doctrine of the Incarnation seemed to him to deny them importance.* He is prepared to cull his proofs

* It is indeed most likely that i. 31, "I did not know him," is a deliberate correction of the impression of the Lucan story of the relationship of John and Jesus.

from several strata, and it is difficult to imagine that if he had considered it worthy of trust, he could have found no place for, drawn no lesson from, a proof so impressive to that generation. The sermons of Acts never mention these stories; Paul never shows that he knew them. It is conceivable that Paul was sufficiently modern to think the Virgin Birth external and unspiritual as an argument for the Person of Christ, but in his many moods it is scarcely conceivable that he should invariably turn his back upon an argument which, for most of his readers, would have been as effective as for those of later centuries. The silence of Paul and of the rest of the New Testament is not to be swept on one side as immaterial.*

We are thus left with the unsupported narratives of Matthew and Luke. A short examination shows that their versions are distinct. There is indeed hardly a point on which they agree.† In Matthew God sends His messages by dreams, in Luke through angels appearing in daylight or through men and women devout enough to be His mouthpieces. Matthew lays much stress on Old Testament

* I do not think that Paul's silence is naturally explained by his indifference to the earthly history of Jesus. This does not extend to the birth, for Paul says (Rom. i. 3) that Jesus was "born of the seed of David" and (Gal. iv. 4) that he was "born of a woman."

It is significant that the author of Hebrews should go out of his way to insist (vii. 3, on evidence which we should not admit) that Melchizedek was "without father, mother or trace of descent," and yet should make no parallel with the miraculous birth of Jesus. If he had known and believed the birth stories, such a parallel would have been exactly in the author's manner.

The answer that in the following words "made to resemble the Son of God," we have a reference, only slightly veiled, to the miraculous birth of Jesus, will not do; for a comparison going back to the clause quoted above would not only sweep away the human father but also the mother and the genealogy of Jesus. Evidently the resemblance touches the clause immediately preceding "having neither beginning of days nor end of life," *i.e.* like the eternally existing Christ.

† "Luke and Matthew supply *in mutually inconsistent ways* this initial defect of the Roman Gospel [Mark] combining the claim of Davidic descent with a later legend of supernatural birth." (B. W. Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, p. 149.) The italics are mine.

See note on p. 47 for H. J. Schonfield's recent work proving that the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke are in large part adapted from a birth legend of John the Baptist. Even in the Revised Version it is easy to see that the real interest of the first part of Luke's story is in the birth of John.

Schonfield shows incidentally that these stories belong to the Jewish folklore and are apocalyptic of the time, as regards their form.

prophecies which seem to him to fulfil themselves in certain incidents. Now and then it is hard to escape the feeling that legend has accommodated the incident to the prediction, especially when elsewhere we find reason to believe that the author was guided by predictions to modify other parts of his Gospel.* Luke allows no place for the coming of the Magi or for Herod's desire to lay hands on the wonderful child, and his book reflects nothing of the alarm which caused the flight into Egypt nor does it hint at the massacre of the innocents. Yet the mission and homage of the Magi could not have remained the secret of a few. As children we had the idea that Herod in person found out somehow that the Magi were in Jerusalem. But actually he must have heard the news from the officials of his court. The bazars of the city must have been buzzing with the story. In no country would it be possible to suppress the rumour of the birth of a child worthy of such worship, for the individuals would not keep their excitement to themselves. But it is trebly unlikely in Judea, where a party, probably a large party, was agog with Messianic expectation.

Indeed this is one instance of a more serious difficulty which dogs the steps of the Birth stories. Both the Gospels describe, and indeed insist on, a recognition of the divine significance of a birth which in an area no bigger than Palestine could not have been concealed from any intelligent or patriotic person,—which further could not have been forgotten in a generation. The wise men of Matthew might return home by what route they liked, but no precautions could have prevented the groups in the gateways and bazars of Jerusalem and the surrounding townships from canvassing and embellishing every smallest incident of their quest and veneration. When Luke i. 65 tells us that fear fell on all those living around and that rumour reverberated through the hill country, the evangelist (whatever the source may have intended) did not mean to refer to the Baptist alone, but to link it with the other portents which signalized the birth of Jesus. The angel gives the news to the shepherds

* See xxi. 2-5 (due to misreading Zech. ix. 9, which only means one ass, in spite of the characteristic Hebrew duplication of phrase) and xxvii. 9.

as a joyful and public announcement and seven verses later we find that "all those hearing wondered." Anna "was speaking about him to all those expecting the redemption of Jerusalem." Can we believe that these pious groups looking for the Messiah's coming would allow a single detail of this unique birth to slip their memory? The fact is that among a people accustomed to depend on the verbal transmission of news and not to wait for newspapers, the suppression of these stories would have been unthinkable, and neither of the two narratives offers a hint that they were suppressed.

Now this is in radical conflict with the whole trend of Mark and with its parallels as we find them in the central portions of Matthew and Luke. Therein not an echo of his miraculous birth accompanies Jesus as he sets out on his first mission of preaching; and no one has heard of portents connected with his babyhood which would mark him out as the expected Messiah.

The contradiction is most arresting in the case of Mary herself. After such an experience as this birth must have been to her it is not easy to understand why "his mother and father were wondering at the things spoken about him" (Luke ii. 33) or why his behaviour as a boy in the Temple should cause a moment of surprise. In other words the birth story itself is not thought through as a psychological unit. But that is only the beginning of the perplexity. Once we pass beyond the Birth narratives into the main current of the Synoptic tradition, the mother of Jesus appears in one solitary incident, that in which she and his brothers stood without and called for him (Mark iii. 31–35). The reply of Jesus can only be fairly read as a repudiation of any claim that she might have upon his attention at that time, and the most natural explanation is to be found in Mark's hint of iii. 21, "his relatives came to secure him, for they said, [or perhaps, 'people were saying'], 'He is out of his mind.'" * The only passage therefore in which the

* It looks as if in Mark's source iii. 31 followed directly on iii. 21. Luke and Matthew omit the story that the relatives came to take him in charge. Probably they thought it derogatory.

Synoptics bring Mary on the scene shows her combining with his brothers in an attempt to frustrate his mission. It is an accepted tradition that the brothers of Jesus disbelieved in his prophetic calling, at least during some part of the public ministry. Yet a word from Mary about the marvels at his birth would have convinced the most sceptical relative. As for herself, could a woman who had been through what these narratives represent have disbelieved *anything* in connection with such a son? The impoliteness of Jesus' answer to his mother at Cana in John ii. 4 may conceal a tradition of misunderstanding between them. At the crucifixion, according to Matthew and Mark, other women, expressly named, stood watching from afar, but the mother of Jesus was not among them. It is not till John xix. 25 that we get any mention of her presence at the cross, and this may well be one of those traditions of the early Church which rose out of apologetic needs. The faithful would feel it impossible that his mother should disagree with her divine son or leave him unsupported. Where could support be more impressive than at the cross? * But the Synoptic tradition knows nothing of any support Mary gave to Jesus,—by her presence or otherwise.

If the virgin birth were historic, it would be the most arresting breach of the observed order of nature since man was evolved. Religious teachers have constantly emphasized that it was so. We are bound to ask whether the proofs are cogent enough to establish such a breach or whether the stories arose from the natural expectation that the God-man of the Church's worship would justify the name by physical as well as spiritual parentage. This natural expectation is a real factor, for we find it later driving the miraculous further back into the life of Mary and in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception even to the time before her

* Acts i. 14 ends up the catalogue of the apostolic group in the upper room "with women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers." This chapter of Acts does not agree in all points with Luke, notably in regard to the forty days of Jesus' stay on earth, and the mention of Mary may be one of the indications that Acts was compiled at a somewhat later date than the Gospel. The words are so placed that they may have been an addition by the editor or even by a copyist.

birth.* There can be only one answer :—stories which are open to such criticisms are not testimony of the quality requisite to establish a divine nativity. We may still hold that Jesus was born of a virgin, but, if we do, we should recognize that in the Gospels we have no trustworthy evidence for our belief and that we have founded it upon other grounds.

At the close of Matthew and Luke are narratives of the Resurrection. These are on a different footing, inasmuch as we have another set in the Fourth Gospel and can trace enough from what is still left of the original ending of Mark to be sure that the lost portion gave some account of the Resurrection. There is also Paul's recapitulation of the appearances in I Cor. xv.—the earliest written testimony. Acts has a short summary of the risen life of Jesus with his disciples in Jerusalem together with the fullest description of the Ascension, but it diverges curiously from Luke,—it tells of a period of forty days' intercourse. Yet the only natural reading of Luke suggests that the discovery of the Resurrection was followed by the Ascension on the same day.†

This perplexity is only one among many. Just as the two accounts of the birth do not agree, so there is radical

* The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is that from the moment when Mary was conceived by her mother she was without sin. In 1854 Pius IX decreed that all Christians must receive this as an article of faith.

The festival of the Assumption commemorates the legend that, on her death, first Mary's soul and then her body were taken to heaven so that she need not wait for the resurrection of the just. Christ, it was said, came down to take her soul to heaven while the apostles were still round her bed.

† Acts i. 3 is hard to explain as an interpolation, for x. 41, "we ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead," and xiii. 31, "for several days," corroborate it. If Luke xxiv. 50 belongs to a period later than that of verse 49 or if a long interval should be imagined at verse 44, we are bound to ask why the author, elsewhere so ready to add notes of time and occasion, here made no attempt to indicate the true chronology of the parting of Jesus. Some expositors think that the amended text (omitting "and was carried up into heaven" in 51 and "worshipped him and" in 52, and so saying simply that Jesus parted from them) allows for his further intercourse with the disciples. An impartial reading of the four verses 50–53 as amended makes this improbable, and Easton (*Luke*) takes "parted from them" as describing the Ascension and writes, "50–53. The Ascension. The narrative continues without a break, so as to indicate an hour late in Easter night." See also A. J. Grieve in Peake's commentary.

difference about detail in all six groups of references to the Resurrection. I Cor. xv. (*a*) knows of no appearance to a woman and (*b*) seems to put the appearance to Paul journeying to Damascus upon a level with the rest. We should infer that Paul regarded all the appearances as spiritual visions with nothing external to correspond,—nothing, that is, concrete or perceptible to the bodily eye. This hardly accords with the Gospels, which suggest and indeed emphasize the bodily presence of Jesus for all eyes to see. The Fourth Gospel has two sets of appearances, the first in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, the second, which we owe to the appended chapter, in Galilee. If read as statements of literal fact, these two chapters contain numerous difficulties of detail.

Matthew gives a short account without much circumstance, in which the women returning from the tomb are the only persons to see Jesus near Jerusalem. They are bidden to tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee, which coincides with the message of the angel at the tomb related in both Mark and Matthew. Matthew xxvi. 32 has also copied Mark xiv. 28, in which Jesus at the last supper promises to go before them into Galilee. We conclude therefore that when Matthew describes how the eleven did meet Jesus in Galilee, apparently for the first time, his representation was not far away from that of the lost ending of Mark.* Matthew concludes with words such as would naturally be spoken by a divine person on his farewell to his disciples.

* B. W. Bacon is suggestive here:

"The disappearance of the ending of Mark was at an extremely early time, so early that neither Matthew nor Luke show any knowledge of it. . . . Why was [it] permitted to disappear? . . . the appeal to accident is simply a counsel of despair. The real reason . . . was because the Church found it too difficult to maintain. . . . By far the easiest course for primitive apologists who knew the Jerusalem tradition of Luke was to drop the original ending of Mark, substituting a manufactured article like Matthew's or those of the so-called longer and shorter endings, or even leaving a blank space like our oldest manuscript. This was much easier than to maintain it in the face of Luke's point-blank contradiction." (*Story of Jesus*, 85–89. G. Allen & Unwin.)

I believe myself that the author of Matthew did know the lost ending of Mark and did reproduce it in the kind of spiritless extract which is characteristic of his style in copying Mark, perhaps with some slight modification to make it fit the tradition of his Church.

It is probable that the command to baptize "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost" should read simply "in my name." Eusebius always quotes it so previous to the Council of Nicæa.* If we accept this guidance, it is interesting to notice that the three last verses of Matthew make Jesus refer to himself in two important commands and two equally important promises, all four involving something tantamount to a claim on men's worship. But throughout he does not mention God. This is strikingly different from all his previous teaching.

Luke begins with a deliberate refusal to accept the fact of appearances in Galilee. That it is deliberate is shown by the alteration of the Marcan "he goes before you into Galilee" (xvi. 7) into "he spoke to you while he was in Galilee" (Luke xxiv. 6). As mentioned above Matthew stands with Mark. Loisy on Acts suggests that Luke's motive was to provide a lengthened intercourse in Jerusalem between Jesus and his disciples which would convince objectors that the Apostles rested their system of instruction upon the Lord's word. But it is hard to see why teaching given in Galilee should not have been as valid as teaching given near Jerusalem, and in the second place, as was said above, Luke in the Gospel does not corroborate the statement in Acts that Jesus tarried forty days. The reason for excluding from both Luke and Acts all references to meetings in Galilee must have been a strong one, but for our purposes it is enough to note how sharp a divergence from Matthew, Mark and John the exclusion reveals.

By the precision of his phrasing (xxiv. 8 f.) Luke seems to intend to belittle the tradition that the women saw Jesus after the vision of the angel at the tomb. The meeting on the way to Emmaus he tells with beautiful sensitiveness, and yet he has not scrutinized the probabilities. It is not easy to believe that for several hours two disciples could have been in close intercourse with a stranger of impressive personality without observing those never-to-be-forgotten marks upon his hands and feet. They were plain to see, for when he met the eleven, Jesus himself called their attention to them.

* Conybeare, *Zeit. Neut. Wiss.*, 1901, p. 275.

Again something, perhaps the desire to answer the sneer that these visions were hallucinations, led Luke to find a place for the story that Jesus ate a piece of fish.

When we add up these disagreements and improbabilities, we cannot feel that the evidence for the Resurrection is of the compelling quality which we are obliged to ask. We shall most of us continue to believe that the existence of the Church is proof that some sufficient cause changed the whole outlook of the disciples. What its nature may have been we must discuss later. But assuredly the detail in which Matthew and Luke clothe the Resurrection narratives will not stand the tests of history.

Thus the matter with which they extend the Marcan record at the beginning and end of their framework, prepares us to treat with caution the other passages where they alter or amplify Mark.

In Matthew we have the following narrative additions :— the reluctance of John to baptize Jesus, because he recognized the greatness in him, and his surrender to nothing less than the explicit insistence of Jesus himself, the walking of Peter on the water with the confession of those in the boat, " Truly you are the Son of God," the designation of Peter as the rock and the gift of the keys, the coin in the fish's mouth, the miracles Jesus performed in the Temple after cleansing it, Judas' question whether it was he who would play the traitor and the answer of Jesus marking him out for the disciple band, the saying that Jesus had only to pray the Father in order to receive a guard of twelve legions of angels, the dream of Pilate's wife, with Pilate's washing of his hands to clear himself from responsibility for condemning the innocent, the earthquake which opened the tombs of the sainted dead and allowed them to rise and appear to many in the holy city, the plan of the authorities to forestall any claim to resurrection by bribing the soldiers,—all these things have the flavour not of good information undiscovered or unused by Mark but of a growing and more credulous tradition. A list so long and so decisive in type is an indication that the author was ill qualified to judge

the relative value of the material he found in his Christian community.

Nor is that the whole. Mark's story of the Baptism probably means that Jesus saw the dove by internal vision and heard the heavenly voice within himself alone. Matthew alters the words slightly so as to indicate that others saw and heard. In xvi. 16, copying Mark's statement that Peter called Jesus "the Messiah," Matthew goes on "the Son of the living God." In xix. 17, instead of the Marcan "Why do you call me good?" we have "Why do you ask me about the good?" and at the entry into Jerusalem Matthew puts a colt by the side of the ass in order to satisfy a misunderstood prophecy of Zechariah. In a similar spirit in xii. 40 he edits a saying from Q (reproduced no doubt with general accuracy by Luke) in order to interpret the sign of Jonah as a prediction of the three days and nights which the Son of Man should spend in the heart of the earth. Matthew's additions are the more significant because in editing the Marcan story he usually abbreviates drastically. These various modifications, therefore, all of one revealing stamp, represent the impulse of the author and his group to bring the story into conformity with the more developed belief in the Incarnation.

The modifications of Mark made by Luke on theological grounds are more artistic and less crude, more subtle and more persuasive. They include the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth and the hint he then gave that he might be driven to turn to the Gentiles (all at a date which seems too early to fit into any natural order of the ministry), the miraculous draught of fish, the raising of the dead youth at Nain, the reference to miracles as a cause of the enthusiasm of the body of disciples escorting Jesus into Jerusalem, the special interest of Herod in Jesus' ministry and the extra trial before Herod with its verdict of innocence, the thrice-repeated declaration of "not guilty" from Pilate, the weary grief which excuses the disciples for sleeping in Gethsemane, the healing of the ear of the high priest's servant, the address to the women on the road to the cross warning them of the

disaster hanging over Jerusalem, the story, contradicting Mark and Matthew, that one of the thieves on the cross championed Jesus against his fellow and then entreated him for mercy, the omission of Mark's "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" taken with the calm words which appear to replace it, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and finally the representation of "all the crowds that had gathered" to watch the crucifixion beating their breasts as they turned sadly away.

With the same purpose Luke says that the Spirit came down "in bodily form as a dove upon him" at the Baptism, so as to show that it was no vision for the inner consciousness of Jesus alone,* and while Matthew (probably copying Q) only makes Jesus "fast" in the wilderness, Luke relates that he "ate nothing at all," a very different thing. The centurion does not come himself as in Matthew to ask for his servant's healing, but sends Jewish elders because he is not worthy to enter the teacher's presence. Again, Luke softens the rebuke to the disciples in the boat for their want of faith (viii. 25) and the antagonism of the reply of Jesus to his mother and brethren (viii. 21), while he omits altogether the attempt of Peter after the first prophecy of the Passion to instruct Jesus in his duty and the answer "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mk. viii. 32 f.). Omitting Lk. xxii. 43 f., as the textual evidence compels, we are left with a story in which Jesus passes through Gethsemane as calm and undisturbed as in the Fourth Gospel. Mark and Matthew make underlings go to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus; with Luke it is the chief priests, the commanders of the temple and the elders, while he omits entirely the flight of the disciples. These modifications are likely to be, not the work of a writer self-consciously adding touches to suit his purpose (though the suppression of the statement predicting resurrection appearances in Galilee is purposeful enough), but rather the product of a slow reshaping amid the groups of the devout as

* In this Luke follows the impulse which guided Matthew. But if others including John Baptist knew of the seal of divine approval, it is impossible to account for John's doubt (Matt. xi. 2–6; Luke vii. 18 ff.) whether Jesus was the Messiah. One on whom the Spirit openly descended, whom a voice from heaven designated as God's beloved Son, could be nothing less than the Messiah.

they told and retold the story till in all simplicity they came to believe that what was best for edification was also true in fact.

The result we have so far reached is that Matthew and Luke show traces of history modified to suit the growth of tradition. The Fourth Gospel is influenced through at least three-quarters of its pages by a presumption that the acts and sayings of Jesus must have justified the developed theology of the period and place of the book's origin. In other words the spiritual expansion of the Church's conception of Jesus has created a legend of his earthly figure. The first and third Gospels do not go nearly so far, but they too exhibit beyond peradventure the same symptoms at a more primitive stage. Each, be it remembered, was working on independent lines, so that the tendency was not limited to one Church or group.

What shall we say of Mark, the remaining Gospel, where we have no means of comparison?

The collection of material of a certain tone added by Luke and Matthew sets off Mark in a creditable light. Not only is Mark free from these particular legendary accretions which Matthew and Luke have welcomed, but it gives attractive human touches to its picture of Jesus. That humanity is also manifested in phrases such as "Why do you call me good?" and "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", phrases which make it more difficult to be satisfied with the presentation of Jesus in the creeds. Survivals like these are as suggestive as a stone with a Roman inscription embedded in the wall of some Elizabethan manor. Yet little is gained by an attempt to classify the teaching of Mark about the person and significance of Jesus under a heading different from that of the other Synoptists. His record, like theirs, is not that of a merely human person, but one which, primitive as it is, fits in with the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus found in the Epistles. In that respect Mark stands with the two who copied from him. Can we say that he parts from them in that his pages are entirely free from the tendency to exaggerate the supernatural character of the life and ministry of Jesus?

To take one instance, if we think that Matthew adds Peter's walking on the water because of the Church's liking for the marvellous,* can we shake off the suspicion that, from some happening simpler and more consonant with nature as we know it, the same force worked up the story that Jesus himself walked on the water? How many of us with any training in physical science and historical criticism do believe that Jesus walked on the water?

Now here we must bring chronology into account. We may assume that the latest date for the Crucifixion is A.D. 33. The date most generally accepted for Mark is between 65 and 70, with Luke about 75–80 and Matthew a few years later. I think it likely that opinion has been too confident in placing Matthew later than Luke. The discrepancies between these two may quite as well be due to temperament and surroundings as to a passing of the years, and there are touches in Matthew which suggest that its editor was in some respects less affected than Luke by the theology of the Church and the events of the Gentile mission.† Of late a few critics have been disposed to put Luke about A.D. 60, in which case we must push Mark back to, say, 55. I am far from being convinced by their arguments. But suppose that we take the earliest date for Mark and the last probable for the Crucifixion, there is still an interval of twenty-two years before Mark took its present shape. For most individual memories twenty-two years is a long time. It is longer still for the composite and rather woolly memory of a movement. Think back into the history of any movement with which you have been connected for a quarter of a century and ask where you would be without minutes and memoranda. Besides, this movement was full of crises and excitement, just the sort of experience that would give rise to conflicting memories.

Ten years is usually regarded as the interval to allow between the writing of Mark and one or both of the other two

* Or perhaps because tradition has put into this allegorical form the story of Peter's rash promise to follow his Master to death, together with his denial and restoration. The narrative of Jesus' walking on the water may also be allegory.

† These, of course, may belong to an earlier Jewish Christian document which the editor was quoting. If so, we cannot use them to date the Gospel as edited.

Synoptics, less than half, that is to say, of that between Mark and the death of Jesus, on the lowest calculation.

Yet the last few pages have gone far to indicate that in those ten years there was notable expansion of the traditions which served the theological interest of the Church, and that Matthew and Luke contain the proof of this.* In the quarter of a century out of which the second Gospel was begotten how much expansion must we conjecture? It is unlikely that the inclination to exalt the Christ by accenting the supernatural note raised its head for the first time after Mark was written.

Indeed the truth must have been all the other way. Long before A.D. 55 the narrative of the life of Jesus must have been to some degree standardized in response to the requirements of the Church's mission. Within six or seven years of the Crucifixion, perhaps within two, Paul had reached his conception of Christ risen and glorified and was teaching it widely. The need for explaining Jesus to inquirers,—crude enough minds many of them!—and giving answer to critics, would ensure the collection of the most effective material at an early date. From sheer necessity the leaders would have at command the proofs that Jesus was the Messiah.† As they began to touch the Gentiles, they would accumulate evidence likely to commend his lordship to the Greek mind. In their devotion the impressible majority would seize upon every helpful "recollection" and the critical few would half-consciously evade the duty of protest,—"after all" they would mutter "it might have been so." The impulse was not at work in one group but in several, and control would be impossible. The form in which a particular story was told would vary from group to group. If we stumble against divergences upon points which do not rouse theological argument, such as the text of the Lord's Prayer, or the discrepant versions of the Beatitudes,‡—just the sort of material in which we

* If the interval was only five years, it strengthens the argument.

† For instance, there is reason to believe that quite early and for general use someone made a collection of Old Testament prophecies which might convince inquirers.

‡ Compare Matt. v. 3–12 and vi. 9–13 with Luke vi. 20–26 and xi. 2–4.

should expect a reverent accuracy of reproduction—for how much elasticity must we allow in passages concerned with the growing claims for the risen Lord? The Epistles show us that doctrine was in process. How much was the narrative in process too?

Believing that exaggeration would be less possible at a time near to the event, some find relief in the inclination to date the Gospels early. The late H. T. Andrews wrote:

> If Canon Streeter is right in his assumption that the source Q was composed at Antioch about the year A.D. 50, and Mark at Rome about A.D. 60, the original nucleus of Luke at Cæsarea in A.D. 60, the original nucleus of Matthew in Jerusalem about A.D. 65, it means that the sources of our Gospels go back to a comparatively early date, and that the bulk of the narrative is therefore twenty, some of it thirty, years earlier than the date which used to be assigned to Matthew and Luke, and at least ten years earlier than the conventional date given to Mark.* Those twenty years make all the difference. If the main sources of our Gospels were reduced to writing between A.D. 50–65, many of the contemporaries of Jesus must have been still alive. The story, therefore, could have been challenged by men who knew the facts. Christianity was during this period subjected to bitter attack from the Jews. Before the end of the period the Neronian persecution had broken out. If there had been any substantial falsehood in the story as it was told by the first evangelists, it is inconceivable that it would not have been exposed and held up to public scorn. The narratives . . . were produced in the fierce light that beat upon the new

* These dates seem to be taken from the diagram on p. 150 of *The Four Gospels*, but the figure there given for Mark is evidently a slip, for in the text, p. 494 f., Streeter argues for A.D. 65 as the approximate date of the Gospel and repeats that in the date-table on p. xi of *The Primitive Church*. The only reference I can find in the text to the date of Q is *The Four Gospels*, p. 513, "Q is admittedly older, probably a good deal older, than Mark."

Andrews' phrase above, "used to be assigned to Matthew and Luke," may be misleading. It is only their underlying sources that Streeter conjectures to be earlier. In the diagram of p. 150 he puts Matthew at A.D. 85 and Luke at 80.

> faith in Jerusalem, Cæsarea, Antioch and Rome. If they could hold their ground in the face of the criticism of their opponents in the first century, we may be sure that in its main outline the narrative is unassailable. (*The Christ of Apostolic Faith*, p. 58. Nisbet.)

The words "in its main outline" are important. "In its main outline," yes. That a great teacher had lived a life of unusual beauty, that he had spoken "as man never spoke," that he had died in opposition to everything that in religion and society separated men from God, that by an amazing paradox his influence upon his followers had been multiplied tenfold as the result of his death, that out of that influence arose a movement which was foolishness to many and life abundant to those who embraced it, so much can be proved by such an argument. But we must not stretch the proof to cover the details of the story, and above all the details significant for theology. These would convey little to those outside. There is no suggestion in the Acts that the persecutors understood what Christianity really was. For some time most Greeks and even most Jews would content themselves with refuting the more obnoxious doctrines of the foolish sect and would not think it worth while to challenge their "reminiscences." In any case it would be long before these would reach hostile groups, and by then the majority of those who might have contradicted would be far scattered or in their graves. By their very nature the passages which counted most for the Church's glorification of Jesus were not susceptible of contradiction. Even if opponents had lived in the next street to Peter, would they have been in a position to challenge the statements that Jesus walked on the water, raised Jairus' daughter from actual death and spoke to his disciples the great words upon the mutual knowledge of Father and Son? Is it likely that, even in A.D. 50 and in Jerusalem, anyone would be accessible who could deny that Jesus said to Pilate that he would come again in glory or that the Son of man had come to give his life a ransom for many? How much less likely in Cæsarea, Antioch or Rome! Besides Q, as we can identify it (especially

if the passage about the mutual knowledge of Father and Son did not belong to it, see p. 243), offers no basis for a full Pauline Christology.

No, the real testing of tradition had to be done in the Church and still more on its fringe, for upon the conviction which the messengers succeeded in inspiring in that fringe would depend the expansion of the Church. As for the Church, once the apostolic leaders had countersigned a story, who could gainsay it? As for the fringe, even to some extent the Jewish fringe, their background was one "of gods and demi-gods, angels, dæmons and magic." The history of religion has a hundred instances, Christian Science for one, to show how aloof from current scientific thought the members of a great movement can remain, even when opposition is articulate and direct. It was the age of the miracle of the new-born Church! How strong the pressure to account for it by stories of the miraculous origin and powers of its founder! In that springtime of inspiration how full of wonder must have been the air they breathed! The probability is that in the period before Mark had assembled his material, the impulse to legendary expansion had as long a run under conditions allowing as generous a freedom as during any later time.*

* (1) Francis of Assisi died in 1226. Bonaventura's Life, written thirty years after, is full of miracles, some of them quite extravagant.

(2) It is barely possible that the theological accretions in Matthew and Luke may be due, not to the years which had elapsed since Mark was written, but to the fact that they both arose in credulous circles while Mark had birth in a circle, not perhaps less orthodox, but (*a*) more tenacious of the traditions, even if these did not keep step with its theology, and (*b*) more reluctant to accept stories which seemed to represent Jesus while on earth as Son of God. If so, part of the argument would have to be put differently. The contrast would then be not perpendicular in time but horizontal in geography. We should infer that two Churches, the homes of dominating traditions, tended to magnify the dignity of Jesus in his life on earth in contrast with the group or groups from which Mark drew his matter. (It is worth noting that Matthew and Luke by their use of Mark show that they gave him deep, if now and then reluctant, respect as an authority.) Our question then takes the form,—Were the Marcan groups absolutely free from the tendency to theological heightening or only relatively so? That others exalted the divine glory of Jesus by adding to Mark's story does not prove that the Marcan tradition never exalted. Nor do we prove that Mark's circle was perfect in its historical discrimination when we conclude that it was somewhat more cautious in accepting and rejecting evidence.

I said earlier that for Mark we had no means of comparison. We have a criterion, however, *in* Mark. There is one place where we can compare Mark with itself, the story of the feeding of the four thousand as it follows the feeding of the five thousand. Since Luke ceases to copy Mark at Mark vi. 45 and picks up the thread again at viii. 27, some have inferred a second edition of Mark which Matthew used, while Luke had the shorter edition before him. This second edition might be due to Mark himself or to an editor. Certainly three paragraphs of this section of Mark do look as if they were rough reproductions of three paragraphs around the story of the feeding of five thousand. Even if the two feedings are not stems of the same root, their insertion reveals the working of a judgment which in these days we should regard as uncritical. The miracle is such as to contravene all human experience. To any scientific mind even of those days it would have been a signal to halt and consider. If Mark had admitted it only once, we might have concluded that the author had scrutinized the evidence and assured himself that in quantity and quality it would bear the required strain. But when the author, whether in the first or second edition, tells it a second time with hardly a change except the figures and with nothing added of circumstance or surrounding, he prompts the feeling that he ought to have been alert enough to recognize a copy of the original picture even in a slightly different frame.*

This shakes our confidence in the rest of the superhuman material which he has admitted into his book.

If, on the other hand, we adopt the rather difficult theory that our Mark is a second edition by another hand, it is clear that before the writing of Matthew the general temper of the Church was loose in its historic standards and able to impose its traditions on the text of the earliest and most objective of the Gospels. How much beyond this section was it able to impose?

* In assessing his data the historian has constantly to decide whether a story is a "doublet" of one which it closely resembles and really goes back to the same event or tradition. The Old and New Testaments have many such suspected "doublets."

A second set of parallels is the three announcements by Jesus of what he was to suffer at Jerusalem (viii. 31, ix. 31 and x. 33). High importance plainly attached to these, for both Matthew and Luke reproduce them all, in spite of their desire to economize space in what they took over from Mark, so as to make room for their other "copy." Probably the authors felt that the triple announcement emphasized the voluntary choice of Jesus and so helped to remove some of the ignominy of the cross. It is likely enough that Jesus foresaw, and more than once referred to, the dangers ambushing his path and indeed that he believed that they might bring on him the fate of the Suffering Servant; but the three passages have the ring of a single reminiscence whose wording has been altered to fit the details in the actual Passion. Their phrasing is perfunctory, reading, when they are all taken together, more like a Church summary than three independent warnings of one in deep anxiety. The originality of deep feeling is missing from the last two. When they are so explicit and thrice repeated, the reader asks why the disciples did not understand.*

The cursing of the fig tree, Mark xi. 12–14, probably arises from some parabolic saying like that of Luke xiii. 6–9 predicting judgment on a nation that produced a fair promise of righteousness but not its fruits. For our present purpose the significant thing is the appendix (after an interval of six verses describing the cleansing of the Temple) which relates that the disciples next morning saw it withered from the roots and commented upon it. Jesus thereupon drew the lesson of faith in God. This has no connection

* Mark viii. 32 says of the first announcement that Jesus spoke "quite freely." That allows opportunity for questions and explanation. Mark and Luke were so impressed by the difficulty of the second announcement as to mention that the disciples did not understand (Mark ix. 32; Luke ix. 45). Luke does the same for the third announcement (xviii. 34). Yet the words are plain as words can be. The behaviour of the disciples in the crisis of the arrest and trial does not suggest that they had been told beforehand of the exact programme of suffering. Even if, as the evangelists insist, they did not understand, after these three careful ntimations they could hardly have behaved as men panic-stricken by the onset of a calamity for which they had been in no degree prepared. For further statements of the difficulty of these three announcements see Johannes Weiss, *Das Aelteste Evangelium* and Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

with the real meaning of the incident. Thus the appendix shows that Mark did not grasp that meaning and by adding inappropriate sentences made it even more obscure.

Do not these instances justify us in thinking that we are dealing with a mind little schooled to criticize which, much as it may have kept out, let in certain statements upon inadequate proof?

Has the apologetic of the Church been sufficiently willing to allow for the rapidity with which in any time of excitement reports of the most circumstantial kind may fasten themselves firmly upon public conviction? The Great War offered scores of examples. In 1916 I travelled from Australia to Plymouth by way of the Cape. On that Orient liner rumours bred as fast as mosquitoes in a stagnant pool. Even in our own comparatively educated and balanced country we had our share. There were those Russian troops passing through Britain to serve on the Western Front. The story was supported by the most concrete and impressive evidence. And a great deal of the evidence was not remote. A friend whom I should trust implicitly told me that less than twenty-four hours ago a railwayman whom he knew well had told him that his son, a ticket collector, had been detailed to pass the trains of Russians through London! We wanted to believe that Russian help was near, in the day of our need we wanted so sorely to believe it, and—the testimony was forthcoming. There was that other story of the angels marching by the side of our troops in the Mons retreat. Mr. Arthur Machen, the well-known journalist, revealed later that he had invented it as a piece of symbolism not to be literally accepted, but it was used in important pulpits with an awed sense that God was standing by our troops. All this was in the era of newspapers and wireless, when we pride ourselves on our power of scientific discrimination.

A fourth modern instance is the keen study of the credulity of educated people by E. H. Jones in *The Road to Endor*. In a Turkish prison camp in the interior of Asia Minor two groups of British officers from Kut took up some mild

spooking to pass the weary hours. It came out afterwards that the results in the first circle were due to the conjuring skill of an Australian officer. Till much later Jones in a second billet was ignorant of how the trick was done, but determined that his party should show manifestations as exciting as those of the other house. By methods which he describes, he was able from the outset to secure the confidence of the majority, and then found that he could only draw back at the cost of the feelings and self-respect of some of his closest friends. He survived the tests of the more sceptical and went to extraordinary lengths in the revelations he provided. By gradual but irresistible advances the majority created an atmosphere of faith which fewer and fewer were able to withstand. For our purposes the interest of the book is that Jones' audiences were so anxious to believe. After the first few sittings he did nothing to persuade them; they did that for themselves. Like moths with a candle they flew round and round the delusion and plunged into it as if the greatest cruelty would have been to prevent them from singeing their wings. Yet these were educated men of the twentieth century and without the strong impulsion of the early days in Palestine,—a religion to which the disciples were committed and of which they needed proof to convince those outside.

In the days following the death of Jesus there were none of the checks which would come into operation to-day. The temper of the age was not critical, less so by a long way than the temper of Britain in the war. A London newspaper writing on the prediction of a tidal wave which would destroy Weymouth on May 30th, 1928, analysed in a suggestive way the change made by the freedom of the modern newspaper.

> Fifty years ago these prophets had a much more credulous public. . . . They obtained far less publicity in the newspapers—just an impressively colourless paragraph here and there—but the whispered word flew from mouth to mouth with incredible swiftness, striking a nameless terror into the hearts of men. (*Daily News.*)

If the difference in the tone of newspapers can make so marked a change in fifty years, what of the time when there were no newspapers at all and "the whispered word flew" unhindered where it listed?

We are justified, therefore, in assuming that, like Matthew and Luke, Mark was influenced by the impulse of the Christian community to welcome stories of miracle, to underline certain proofs of the uniqueness of Jesus and to stretch sayings here and there till there could be no doubt of the support they gave to the Church's doctrine. However we may regret it, we shall admit that many passages helping to buttress the conviction of the Church that Jesus was God the Son may have been due to piety rather than to recollection. If we are right in judging that the author of Mark was a man of simplicity, directness and spontaneous honesty, we shall be inclined to lay the result at the door of the community rather than of Mark himself.

We shall remember B. W. Bacon's words quoted in the footnote to p. 39, in which he insists that for all the compilers of our Gospels without exception "tradition and history were virtually the same thing."

Latimer Jackson, in pages where the mental balance and reverence match the scientific carefulness of the research, seems to make no exception for Mark, since he writes, "even in the Synoptics he [Jesus] is ever and again pictured as seen by the eye of faith."* Whether the eye of faith is sufficient to create the orthodox representation of the Church we must later inquire, but the quotation means that its visions cannot be taken as history. Many modern critics would share Latimer Jackson's view. We shall be dwelling among pleasant unrealities if we fail to recognize that this view affects the foundations on which the Church has based the doctrine of the Person of Christ.

* *Problem of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 132.

V

Summary

The modern reliance on the sinlessness or perfect character of Jesus makes it essential to examine the evidence for this.

The passages already discussed in the Fourth Gospel are plainly incompatible with this doctrine. Fortunately we may treat them as unhistorical. In the Synoptics source criticism leads us to attach (in general) more authority to material found in Mark, Q or L than to that apparently drawn from elsewhere. This entitles us to rule out some of the unqualified condemnation of the Pharisees, of the predictions of future punishment and of other seemingly sub-Christian sayings.

Of the Synoptic material better supported—(1) Instances where Jesus appears ignorant of scientific truth are unimportant, but some sayings are akin to the crude apocalyptic of the time, to its theory of rewards and punishment and of a material Second Coming. In one who reveals God does not mental crudity involve a measure of moral crudity also?

(2) Passages which jar because of a tinge of race feeling or of bitterness toward opponents. The doctrine of irreparable doom incompatible with the doctrine of God as Father, and with Jesus' more characteristic thought and practice.

Can we follow *The Lord of Thought* in attributing even these better attested Synoptic sayings to the misunderstanding of Jesus' followers? Such a method seems too drastic, it sacrifices his lucidity and power to impress his main teaching. It would show the disciples incapable of estimating what divinity involved.

More likely that in these places Jesus was inconsistent. If so, we cannot say that he was perfectly revealing God.

Justification of the method which rejects passages of orthodox tendency such as might originate from the theology of the Church and at the same time makes use of passages not likely to be invented which tell against the orthodox view.

The argument that Jesus never shows penitence is inconclusive.

Since the passages criticized are inconsistent, they do not represent the central thought of Jesus.

V

WAS JESUS LIABLE TO ERROR?

Many students of the New Testament recognize the insufficiency of the proofs that Jesus claimed to be God manifested in the flesh. They would also admit that we cannot depend on many of the reports of acts or sayings taken by the Church to justify the corresponding dogma. Yet the large majority of modernists still accept the essential content of the ancient creeds. But as they have been compelled to jettison much of the evidence on which the creeds were originally based, and as no new proofs have come to light in the meantime, they naturally attach great importance to one of the items remaining in the orthodox case—the perfect character of Jesus. This stands out prominently in the series of papers read at the Modern Churchmen's Conference held at Girton in 1921, a series of which the reverence, honesty and courage put all thinkers under an obligation. Four extracts of sentence or phrase will illustrate the point.

R. G. Parsons, now Bishop of Middleton, in a paper of peculiar insight and frankness has these words :

> There is . . . that sense of perfect accord with the Ideal which left with those who knew Him best, through all their bewilderment and misunderstanding of Him, the clear impression that in Him was no sin, not merely that He avoided doing anything that was contrary to love, no merely negative sinlessness, but a positive fulfilment of all love's righteousness. The New Testament writers do not try to *prove* the moral perfection of Jesus judged by His own standard, they simply *assert* it, a far more eloquent testimony of the impression He made upon them.

The late C. W. Emmet wrote of Jesus as "One who, by what He was and by what He taught, revealed to mankind the perfection of God and of Man."

The present Bishop of Birmingham allied himself with the statement of Du Bose, that "the victor over sin was naturally the victor over death," while J. F. Bethune-Baker drew the inference: "The relations into which I can enter with Jesus are for me relations with God."

We may take a passage from the late Friedrich von Hügel as an indication of the importance which the acutest defenders of orthodoxy attach to the doctrine of sinlessness:

> The Chalcedonian formula [of Two Natures in Christ, human and divine] has, upon the whole, been more satisfactorily attended to as regards the Divine Nature than as regards the Human Nature, and limitations, obscurities, weaknesses, growths, temptations, which are interwoven with human nature as such, have been, for the most part, too much ignored or explained away, even though they still stand on clear record in the Synoptic Gospels. Yet the predominant motive of this trend was, I believe, far less a fear of forgetting the Divinity over * the Humanity than anxiety lest men should, little by little, come to deny, or at least to ignore, the Sinlessness of Jesus, even as man. And this motive . . . should surely operate within us still. . . . True it is not easy to maintain the Sinlessness of Jesus whilst admitting those other conditions and happenings. . . . (*Essays and Addresses*, 2nd Series, p. 196. Dent.)

Here is the same idea generalised:

> Loofs himself . . . holds that "we can never penetrate so deep as to learn *how* God made Him what He was," namely, one possessing unique knowledge of God as Father and perfect moral holiness.
>
> Here we have the feature common to the whole school of recent "positive" or religiously affirmative

* Von Hügel's style is often obscure. The word 'over' probably means 'in contemplation of' and not 'which is dominant over.'

> Christology, viz. its sheer faith in the religious uniqueness of Jesus the Christ. This uniqueness, seen in His filial holiness in particular, it holds to be a fact verifiable by the experience of the insight of faith (as a function of the whole soul or person). It is also for faith a miracle, in the sense of a fact implying the direct action of God's transcendent will to create something beyond the result of His immanent working. (In an essay by J. Vernon Bartlet,* *The Lord of Life*, pp. 178 f. S.C.M.)

These quotations could be matched in nineteen out of twenty books on the Person of Christ. The argument, whether it be of sinlessness or of perfection, was always highly regarded and the invalidation of other proofs has left it the main support of many to-day.

It is with reluctance that anyone undertakes to examine the argument, especially if he owes to Jesus that message of the divine grace which has made all things new. Yet just here is the challenge needed. It is not enough to speak in positive terms, however decisive, of the full humanity of Jesus. Theological literature of the last ten years shows that positive statement alone does little to remove popular misconceptions. The only result is a feeling of tolerant benevolence that " So-and-so's all right at bottom, though it's a pity he can't be content to leave those liberal ideas alone."

In these times no trained theologian would question the full humanity of Jesus. The problem of the Church to-day is to justify for this generation the doctrine of his divinity. This permits us no escape from the examination of the claim to inerrancy. If the Church claimed only that Jesus was the greatest of human prophets, no one would feel any call to this task. We should be able to surrender ourselves to

* The weakness of this interesting book of essays is that it passes over the difficulties created by the modern criticism of the Gospels. It assumes the orthodox New Testament interpretation of the experience of the disciples and early believers, and its aim is to find a theology which will account for it in terms our generation can understand. But the New Testament interpretation of the experience is the place where for our generation the shoe pinches.

affection and gratitude. Small mistakes, natural prejudices of the society in which he lived, moments of impatience would all pass unnoticed. But when the Church claims that Jesus was divine because he was perfect, we cannot avoid the duty of estimating the evidence for perfection, both in the mental and moral sphere.

There is another reason. Nothing less than this will persuade the ordinary believer, not too anxious to strain his mind by taking thought overmuch, that criticism really has made a difference in the theology which is tenable to-day. Nothing else will compel the Church to face the problem without shrinking. And when our affections are concerned, how easily we shrink, and with what excellent motives! Tradition has created an atmosphere in which the Gospels are marked and digested; almost every sentence is half-consciously glossed by an explanation learnt at our mother's knee or in Sunday School or in the early training of orthodoxy. From the time of the original Gospel manuscripts, the story has been read with the presupposition that Jesus was divine. Any passage which at first reading seemed to rouse uneasiness or dissent we have passed over with the feeling that it must be all right, if it was the speech or action of the Son of God. Questions did raise their heads, but men put them to rest by curious devices of thought.* What He did must be above question; what He said must be universally true. Paul wrote that, when the Jews read Moses, a veil lay upon their heart: a more beautiful veil has lain across our minds as we have read the Gospels.

For to anyone who received the Fourth Gospel as an historic record, the decision ought to have been simple. The unworthy retorts quoted from John viii. on pp. 57 f. are not such as we should expect a teacher of religion to have used. Still less should we be content to regard them as part

* A member of his Bible class once asked a Scottish minister whether God was just in fore-ordaining all human actions, good and bad, and then in making a distinction among the creatures of His will by sending some to punishment. Report has it that he answered: "You must understand that the Almighty in His public and judicial capacity is obliged to do many things which in a private and personal capacity He would be ashamed to do." Those who have watched the shifts of popular apologetic will not find the story incredible.

of the revelation of God upon human lips. No one can measure the harm which must have been done by the Church's age-long acquiescence in the idea that, when God was manifested on earth, these were words He might legitimately utter. It is surely significant that in the very chapter which shows that the author or editor of the Fourth Gospel was so perilously astray in his conception of the way the Saviour could speak, we should find the challenge that has provided a foundation for so much Christology, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (viii. 46).

The entire section (pp. 55–59) discussed other Fourth Gospel passages which arouse moral and spiritual disquiet. By proving that the Fourth Gospel is not to be trusted as history, criticism has delivered us from the necessity for believing that Jesus spoke them. But if we had to accept them as historic, many would feel it needless to discuss further the question of sinlessness.

The Synoptics also contain numerous passages which we should be loth to associate with a divine person revealing the love of God. But modern criticism would regard several of these as no more historic than the Fourth Gospel.

The note on p. 34 provides a useful criterion for the relative historicity of the various sections of the Synoptic Gospels. What is found in Mark, and what in Matthew and Luke seems to come from Q, is likely to be earlier and therefore worthier of trust than that which is otherwise added by the editors of Matthew and Luke. To a judgment so broad we must, of course, attach qualifications. As has been suggested in Chapter IV, there are passages in Mark which are of a different tone from the rest, or which seem inconsistent with other Marcan matter, or which appear less convincing than the version in Matthew or Luke. The same is true of the Q material, though, since we know it only through the agreements of Matthew and Luke, any given extract is harder to appraise.

At the same time, sections for which neither Mark nor Q stand sponsor may be of great historic value. The third source (or sources) of Luke, sometimes called L,* has con-

* Streeter, *Four Gospels*, p. 222.

tributed some of the noblest teaching in the Gospel. The parable of the Prodigal Son is one instance. The editor of Matthew had apparently a similar source, which some have called M. It shows great interest in the Second Coming and this may well have influenced its wording. Most would rank it below the sources just mentioned. Probably Matthew and Luke had other traditions, written or oral.

The result is that we are frequently compelled to use our individual judgment. We shall give a discriminating preference to anything found in Mark, Q or L, yet, if there seem conclusive reasons against any of their verses, we shall not treat these as history. On the other hand, a saying or story which, as a document, has no presumption in its favour, may convince us by its likeness to the best founded records of Jesus. For an instance we may go outside the Synoptics to the extract inserted by a few MSS. at John vii. 53–viii. 11, "the woman taken in adultery." That reads like a genuine tradition about Jesus and the style is akin to that of the Synoptics.*

If, therefore, we apply such standards to the Synoptic Gospels, we rejoice to find poor support for several sayings unhappily attributed to Jesus. One section of these belongs to the controversy with the Scribes and Pharisees. In the aggregate the denunciations of the Pharisees make an impressive mass. Some of these are reasoned and beyond a doubt justified; the Pharisaic system did lend itself to unreality and its root idea of God was often unworthy and misleading. That can be established from the writings of Jewish scholars like Klausner. But of the Gospel references a number are one-sided and unjust. There is much contemporary evidence of Pharisaic goodness and the New Testament itself contains such indications as the scribe who was not far from the Kingdom, the sincerity of Paul's early history and his witness that the Jews had a zeal for God, even if it was without knowledge. Further, it has often been pointed out that the position held by the Pharisees depended on nothing but the respect they secured, and that men will respect no religious body unless it has some saving

* The Ferrar group of MSS. insert the story after Luke xxi. 38.

grace of single-hearted piety. Stories in Jewish literature show how genuinely good the Pharisees could be.

But in the records the preaching of Jesus condemns the class as a class and allows neither for exceptions nor for the great ideal which underlay the distortions of their doctrines. Take the frequent use of "hypocrite" in direct address. The word developed its evil meaning from its more primitive sense of "play-actor." Through Mark and Luke a natural metaphor gives it very much our shade of meaning.* In these passages the conduct Jesus condemns does justify the word. But in the Septuagint and certain other Greek versions of the Old Testament, also in the Psalms of Solomon, it has a cruder, more violent sense, that of the God-despising, impious man, whose portion will be destruction. In several of the 12 verses where Matthew uses it without support from the other two Gospels he intends it to have this meaning. This is clear from Matt. xxiv. 51, "the Lord of that servant shall appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The hypocrite, that is to say, is the typical denizen of hell.

Since this more violent meaning is only found in passages where Matthew stands alone, there is strong reason to believe that Jesus did not use it with this meaning, but that in the heat of Palestinian controversy against the Jews the editor of Matthew put it into his mouth. Along with the epithet some of the sayings which follow it may perhaps come under suspicion. In the same spirit xxiii. 15 says that the proselyte becomes "a child of hell twice as bad as yourselves." Again, in xii. 34 and xxiii. 33 Jesus addresses the Pharisees as "offspring of vipers" and "You serpents, you offspring of vipers." We should be unhappy to think that Jesus spoke so, and indeed the use of "vipers" is an interesting illustration of the growth of controversial tradition. Matt. iii. 7 and Luke iii. 7 (*i.e.* Q) state that John the Baptist addressed his audiences as vipers. Christian reciters liked these full-blooded epithets and transferred them from John the Baptist to Jesus, and Matthew took them into his text.

* Mark vii. 6 and the parallel Matt. xv. 7, Matt. vii. 5 and Luke vi. 42 (*i.e.* Q), Luke xii. 56 (origin not clear), Luke xiii. 15 (probably from L).

In Matt. xxiii. 34–36 Jesus follows and justifies this epithet by the succeeding verses, where he himself charges the Jews with the habit of murdering prophets. But Luke xi. 49 introduces the quotation with "The wisdom of God says." This makes it almost certain that the condemnation was a written fragment of the Wisdom literature of the time. If so, Jesus may possibly have quoted it and given it a measure of endorsement, but it is more likely that the Church after the death of Jesus used it as an effective commentary upon his rejection by the Jews, and thus Matthew came to count it among the sayings of Jesus.

Then there are some of the most decisive among the predictions of future punishment.

> Matt. xiii. 41 f. and 49 f., "The Son of Man shall send out his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all the stumbling-blocks and those who practise iniquity, and they shall throw them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth."
>
> Matt. xviii. 34 f., "And being angered, his lord delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all what was owed to him. So shall my heavenly Father do to you, unless you each forgive your brother from the heart."
>
> Matt. xxv. 41 and 46, "Then he [the Son of Man, the king] shall say also to those on the left: Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels . . . and these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life."

All these are (*a*) found in Matthew alone, (*b*) in parables, and (*c*) in parables dealing with the end of the world. Apocalyptic eschatology ran naturally to lurid colours and impressive threats. The Matthaean editor moved freely in that realm of expression.*

* Matthew has several references to 'fire' and 'judgment' which have no parallel in Mark or Luke. His interpretation of the parable of the Tares misses the point of Jesus,—God's patience and caution in judging, and substitutes the idea of certainty and severity.

The similar conclusion to a Lucan parable, xix. 27, " But these my enemies who did not want me to reign over them, bring here and execute before me," is plainly part of a second story patched on to the original parable of the pounds.

There remains Luke xx. 18, the painful passage which says of " the stone at the head of the corner," " every one who falls on that stone will be shattered, but the man on whom it falls it will crush to powder." Most commentators understand that Jesus is referring to himself in this. Here Luke is copying the parable of the Vineyard from Mark. But neither Mark nor his other follower, Matthew, has this verse.* Evidently Luke himself is responsible for its insertion.

By refusing to accept these passages as sayings of Jesus we lighten our problem in one part and aggravate it in another. On the one side, we escape the necessity of believing that Jesus spoke these words, manifestly so incompatible with his doctrine of the Father as Christianity has been led to develop it. There is less to query in the picture of Jesus when we have discovered and cleared away inconsistent features which have been painted over the original. (In parenthesis we may urge that the clearing away of the over-painted features should be effective, which means that teachers should make the Church understand that these are probably not sayings of Jesus.) But on the other side, the attempt to justify historic Christology, we add to our difficulty. For all these centuries the Church has been willing to accept these inconsistent features without hesitation and has insisted that, over-painting and all, the figure of Jesus was that of God the Son. Once again we are bound to ask whether the Church which thought these features compatible with divinity—to say nothing of the editors of Matthew and Luke, who did the over-painting—was competent to testify that Jesus was " without sin " and perfect in his revelation of God. The Church would command greater confidence for its doctrine of the absolute moral perfection of Jesus if it had known enough about God

* Matt. xxi. 44 is almost certainly not original, but an insertion from Luke made by a copyist.

to repudiate these sayings. Even at the end of nineteen centuries it has rarely had the discernment, or the courage, to repudiate them. It only slurs them over as it reads.

We turn now to the records of Jesus which have better support, but do not consort well with the doctrine of his inerrancy. We remember first the passages in which Jesus seems to be ignorant of scientific truth only discovered long after his time, or of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament. In itself this ignorance need cause little anxiety, and indeed has caused little, since the first introduction of critical ideas into this country. But here and there we wonder if ignorance in intellectual matters can be entirely disconnected from the ethical principles which guided Jesus. The records certainly suggest that he attributed some, if not all, disease to the agency of evil spirits. In Mark ix. 25 he bids the dumb and deaf spirit to come out of the epileptic boy and never to enter into him again, while in Luke xiii. 16 (a narrative from L which seems like a true reproduction of his words) he says that for eighteen years "Satan has bound" the woman bent double by a "weakness." In the first of these passages the incompatibility with the theories of modern psychology is unmistakable—the evil spirit comes from outside. The same may be said of many places in which Jesus speaks of what primitive people always regard as "possession."

In Mark x. 30 Jesus promises those who for the Gospel's sake have left dear ones or property "a hundredfold now in this present time of houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields with persecution." The words after 'time' may be inserted by an editor, for Matthew and Luke have not got them. But there is more of the same sort. In Matt. viii. 11, Luke xiii. 28 (Q) the reward of the Gentile believers is to share the Messianic banquet with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the Jews are cast into the outer darkness. In Luke xxii. 30 Jesus tells the disciples, "You shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and you shall sit on thrones

judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The last half is found in Matthew also (xix. 28). Our reverence for Jesus has led us to spiritualize these passages as we read them, but in the main they seem to belong to the beliefs of the period about "the good time coming" such as we find in apocalyptic writing. It is evident that the disciples took these hopes literally. In Mark x. 37 the eagerness of James and John to sit on the right hand and the left shows how they had understood Jesus. In his answer he challenged them to face the suffering which would qualify them for the privilege, but he said nothing to warn them against a material picture of the next life and its reward. Yet he was wont to correct his disciples when he saw the need.

Did Jesus rise above his period and treat these pictures as half-humorous fantasies to be mystically interpreted or did he reproduce the apocalyptic thought around him?

There are several passages which raise the difficulty of rewards and punishments. They seem not so much to illustrate the working of moral law and to urge men to make it their ally—that would give pause to no one—as to set up rewards and punishments as the motives for moral action. In Luke xiv. 14 (from L) those who have entertained others too poor to entertain in return will get their recompense in the resurrection. Matthew vi. 1, 4, 6 and 18 * all deal in rewards from "your Father who sees in secret." † This is the Eastern doctrine of merit. In an address to students, or any other gathering of sensitive younger people, should we be prepared to use these passages as they stand? Yet they ring credible enough in the atmosphere of Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era. So does the curious association of reward with poverty which we find in Luke. The Lucan form of the Beatitudes, which probably represents Q better than does Matthew's fuller and more spiritualized version,‡ promises reward in the next life to the poor, the

* Though these passages are not found in Mark or Luke, I am inclined to accept them.

† I fancy that Luke xvi. 8 f. are ironical, but if, as most commentators think, they are to be taken seriously, they teach that reward in heaven follows the skilful use of money on earth.

‡ Luke vi. 20–23. See Harnack, *Sayings of Jesus*.

hungry and the mourners—not, as far as we can see, for any goodness on their part, but simply because they suffer. There is a parallel to this in the parable of Dives and Lazarus,* if we take it as it stands. In our conventional reading of it we always infer that Dives had neglected the brother at his gate. The parable does not say so. It does not even say that Lazarus was a good man. Dives suffers in the next life, says Abraham, because he was rich in this, and Lazarus enjoys in heaven, because he was poor below. Again, in the light of the last two passages Luke xiv. 12–14 probably means that it is a mistake to plan to take a reward in this life, for, if you do, you will have exhausted what is due to you, and will get nothing in the resurrection. This group of sayings is cousin to the Jewish dreams of the "Day of Jehovah," when the Gentile oppressors would be abased and the "poor," the persecuted Israelites, would be exalted. In such dreams of reversal there was no need to prove a case: by the mere fact of undeserved suffering the Jews were obviously worthy.

The actual presence of the apocalyptic elements presents an even larger difficulty. In spite of his predictions Jesus did not come again, nor did a comparatively short interval bring the end of the current age and the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom. When discussion forced this difficulty into notice and linked it with further difficulties created by the general character of the apocalyptic predictions, many were disposed to solve it by attributing all the apocalyptic passages to the editors and behind them to Church tradition. But scholars felt this to be too drastic and the tide turned. In his *Authority of the Bible*, C. H. Dodd has several useful pages upon this. Their main thought is as follows:

> It is a part of this time-relativity that Jesus, like the prophets, could not but make use of the thought-forms of His age. Some of His teaching, for example, is cast in the mould of an eschatological outlook which is distinctly that of the first century and alien from our

* Luke xvi. 19-31. Probably from L. The second half seems to be an addition.

> own thought. It is almost certain that this element has been exaggerated by His reporters, and it is highly probable that in various ways our records of His teaching are more deeply coloured by their *milieu* than the teaching itself was. Yet it is not to be thought that even in a perfectly accurate report it would have appeared entirely free from such colouring.
>
> . . . it is easy to be over-hasty in attempting to purge His teaching of temporary elements. Thus, a great deal of the teaching of Jesus . . . is coloured with ideas . . . belonging to Jewish apocalyptic—the catastrophe of Doomsday, the coming on the clouds, the miraculous transformation of the earth and its inhabitants. How much of this is original? The earlier liberal criticism said, "None; it was all interpolated by the evangelists out of current thought." . . . More mature criticism, however, showed that no objective analysis of the Gospels gave any justification for eliminating eschatology from the teaching of Jesus, though it showed at the same time that in adopting such conceptions from current thought He modified them more than the evangelists themselves realized. (Pp. 236–8. Nisbet.)

There is reason, therefore, to believe that Jesus looked for a rapid and catastrophic fulfilment of some important part of the Messianic programme. And this did not come to pass. Is that fact without bearing on the question of the personality of Jesus? A few lines later Dodd goes on:

> To-day we are distrustful of the superficial evolutionism of the last generation, and prepared to confess that anything worthy to be called the Kingdom of God must be more than immanent and natural. Something mysterious, other-worldly, supernatural, is inherent in it. The mythological forms in which Jesus' proclamation of it is handed down, we now see, preserve something essential to the idea, which we were in danger of losing altogether in our haste to modernize what He is reported to have said.

But lessons such as these are only learnt by those who face the fact that the Second Coming did not take place. The first generation of Christians and, as far as we can judge, those who heard Jesus, had the impression of something more material and more catastrophic. Certainly Paul in his later epistles teaches that the new age has come. Other non-Pauline epistles teach the same. The Fourth Gospel insists upon it. But it was not the new age as Jesus and the disciples expected it, if we may give any trust to what is probably a majority of the Synoptic sayings about the future. If this had happened to an Old Testament prophet, we should have said that the essential truth of his message was clothed in error. Is it possible to judge differently when Jesus made the prediction? And can we dissociate it entirely from the view he held and taught of the nature of God? Apocalyptic teaching sees God upon the throne of a more or less material Kingdom brought into being by more or less material means. It looks to secure by sudden cataclysm what can only come from the slow human effort to co-operate with God. Though, as we shall see later, Jesus went far to spiritualize the idea, he was still to some extent enmeshed in the current desires and standards of his people. Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel served true religion when they carried his main teaching farther and transformed the expectation.*

The two passages teaching that God is moved by importunity seem to belong to the same stratum of current Judaism,—"If he will not give because he is his friend, because of his shamelessness he *will* get up and give him all he needs" (Luke xi. 8, probably from Q), and "because this widow bothers me, I will grant her justice" (Luke xviii. 5).† We generally assume that these words do not bear quite their natural meaning; a tacit mental adjustment saves us from accepting their doctrine of God. Yet the words are plain enough. Everyone who knows the East will recognize their plausibility. "Importunity" plays so large

* See pp. 157, 230.

† This may perhaps be from Q. In any case the application in ver. 7 is to an apocalyptic deliverance.

a part in Eastern life that work-a-day wisdom must always reckon with it. But here we talk of God. Does He really give more to those who "bother" Him than to those who have equal need and lay it before Him with the quietness of filial trust? If any other teacher had spoken these words, should we not have felt that he shared the natural immaturity of the thought of his time?

With those who feel that God has made the world very good and filled it with affection, it goes against the grain to accept the ascetic view of human life which seems to underlie the stern demands of Luke ix. 59–62, Matt. viii. 21 f. Commentators have given various explanations, some reasonable enough,* why Jesus should refuse to permit one would-be disciple to go off and bury his father or another to say good-bye to his family. But the words about letting the dead bury their own dead seem to brush aside any need for explanation. Besides, there are other indications, like the Lucan version of the Beatitudes, which suggest that Jesus may have taken the ascetic view of life. We may recall too the way in which he seemed to dismiss mother and brethren from any claim upon him.

If they are to be taken as they stand the Synoptic passages so far quoted may be classed as crudities. They fit naturally into the Judaism of the time of Jesus. In the main they are mental crudities rather than moral and yet it is not easy to be satisfied with the distinction. Does it not involve the bad psychology of divided spheres in the personality? Do not these passages in their actual religious effect compel us to conclude that Jesus, the Incarnation of God on earth, was not always consistent in detail with the view of God he mainly taught? Indeed we are bound to ask whether one who is liable to intellectual error can give or be a revelation which is morally perfect in the strictest sense. Personality, we are learning, is a unified whole. Can a personality be

* The best is that Jesus was just gathering his group of comrades for the last dangerous march to Jerusalem. Except that Luke ix. 51 (probably from L) is not far away, there is no evidence for this; and, as this refusal to let the disciple go to the burial was in Q, as Matthew shows, the two passages can scarcely have been connected in Luke's sources.

subject to intellectual mistake without impairing to some degree the picture it conveys of God?

Then there is a second class of passages in which sayings or attitudes, which we can hardly dismiss as crudities, grate upon the moral sense which the New Testament has trained.

The instruction to the disciples of Mark vi. 11 * to shake the dust of a "place" off their feet because it would not hear them comes near to discourtesy. It seems to apply on the first visit to the city or village. Even a short missionary experience would make any gesture of the kind impossible for a man of sympathy and imagination. We have failed to see this because we treat the Gospel words and people as if they were specimens under a glass case, from which we could not expect the reactions of a living thing. Knowing ourselves to be ignorant of Oriental customs, we assume that a command of this kind is in keeping with them. Yet courtesy is more essential in the East than in the West.

There are passages too which seem out of accord with the lessons the modern missionary has had to learn in the matter of race consciousness. Moslem opponents have put their finger on the dialogue with the Syro-Phenician woman (Mark vii. 25 f. and Matt. xv. 22 f.). Dogs are not nice animals in Palestine and the word is not a nice word on Jewish lips. The woman accepts her inferiority and uses it cleverly to turn the argument. Indeed it would appear to be the readiness of her answer, rather than the need of her sick daughter, which made Jesus grant the healing. What would have happened if, instead of being a clever woman, she had been stupid, or like most of us had been too unready to think of the right reply till afterwards? Did Luke omit the story because it was impossible to commend it to Greek

* This was evidently in Q as well as in Mark, for Luke has it once (ix. 5) when copying Mark and another time (x. 10 f.) when using Q. Some will infer that Mark got it from Q. The fact that Acts xiii. 51 mentions the same gesture and xviii. 6 a similar one may suggest that the practice is read back into the time of Jesus from apostolic use. But if it had not the authority of Jesus, how did it come to be an apostolic use? I can find no earlier parallel.

readers, already made sensitive by the exclusiveness of the Jews? *

Again, in Matt. xi. 22 and Luke x. 14 (Q) the comparison of Chorazin and Bethsaida with Tyre and Sidon suggests that the condemnation of Tyre and Sidon was self-evident. Nothing indicates the charge against them. Tyre and Sidon were standard types of wickedness and cruelty in the controversial writing of the Old Testament, but did God see them so? It is one thing to take cities long dead like Sodom as examples of damnation and quite another to use living cities populated by men and women of flesh and blood. Perhaps in Tyre and Sidon there might have been the five righteous that Sodom lacked. No doubt the two cities were idolatrous and perhaps some of their worship was immoral, but what chance had they of coming to the true worship of Jehovah? The methods of the Maccabees were not likely to draw them to Him. Nor have we the smallest hint that any disciples had preached Jesus' call to repentance in their streets. Would these sayings dispose the followers of Jesus to meet individuals from Tyre and Sidon as children of the one heavenly Father?

Two other passages we must examine on the racial attitude attributed to Jesus. In Matt. vi. 31 f. and Luke xii. 29 f. (Q) the warning about the danger of paying attention overmuch to eating, drinking and clothes is pointed by the next words, "for all these things are what the Gentiles seek." † Now this is surely to treat the Gentiles as a sort of nursery bogey of the Jewish mind. "What they do must plainly be wrong, and if they do it, you will not want to." There is a subtle acceptance of the Jewish view that the Jews alone had a revelation of God. Were no Jewish examples of materialism available?

Sometimes after preparing an address on Indian religion for an English audience, one makes slight but significant changes in giving it, if an Indian appears. The sight of the

* Luke's omission may have no significance. Just here he drops a whole section of Mark of which this is a small part.

† In the same spirit Matt. xviii. 17 says that the man who will not hear the Church is to be as a Gentile and a publican. This, however, may come not from Jesus but from Matthew's Palestinian tradition.

Indian awakens a more scrupulous sense of justice. So these words suggest the question: Would Jesus have used the words if Plato or Marcus Aurelius had been sitting before him?

The importance of the race problem to-day challenges us to be clear about the temper we may ascribe to God. Our human minds are restricted and it is a constant struggle to break free from our geographical limitations and the prejudices they breed. Race superiority lingers insidiously and in unexpected places, and expresses itself almost against our will. In a human prophet it is explicable and, when it is so obviously out of tone with his message, almost blameless. But God must be bigger than that. His interest in all His children must be equal in its intensity, and we must purify our thought of Him from any suggestion that He gives privilege or favour to special races.

The woes upon the Pharisees in Matthew xxiii. and Luke xi. come from Q.* They allow of no exception: all Pharisees are tarred with the same brush. As was said a few pages back, that picture corresponds neither with history nor with probability. It is possible that the tellers of the tradition or the editors of Q have omitted qualifying words and unjustly treated the condemning phrases as generalizations, but the impression is left that on both sides controversy had bred bitterness. The description "evil and adulterous generation" (Matt. xii. 39, Luke xi. 29,—Harnack thought that this wording was the original wording of Q) is what John the Baptist or an Old Testament prophet would have said, but does God thus generalize His judgment of a people? Much in the Old Testament, still more in the words of Jesus elsewhere, suggests that with unwearying patience He is seeking and treasuring the slightest evidence of goodness in His children.

Further, among these passages which we have more reason to accept as historical, there are several references to irreparable doom. The thrice-repeated warning against

* Against these longer passages of Matt. and Luke, Mark has only three verses (xii. 38–40), and these are so worded as to refer only to the black sheep among the Scribes.

Gehenna (Mark ix. 43–47), defined the first time as "the undying fire," has a conventional sound and the phrase at least may come from a catechism of the Church. But the substance is matched in other places. The words in Q about shaking off dust are followed (Matt. x. 15, Luke x. 12) by verses in which Jesus prophesies for these unfriendly Galilean villages a fate worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. God will punish a failure to give immediate response to Gospel preaching with the severity due to the abominable wickedness of the Cities of the Plain, and Q pronounces woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida because they had not turned to repentance when they saw the miracles performed in their midst (Matt. xi. 21, Luke x. 13—Q).

Of his own action Jesus speaks in the same spirit :—

> Then I shall confess to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, all that work iniquity. (Matt. vii. 23, Luke xiii. 27, probably from Q, though for some reason Harnack omits it.)
>
> If any one shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven. (Matt. x. 33, Luke xii. 9—Q.)

Mark viii. 38 has a parallel :—"If any one shall be ashamed of me and of my words . . . the Son of Man will be ashamed of him. . . ." All these three sayings refer to the coming day of judgment.

Finally, we must take the curious saying in Mark iii. 29 :

> The sons of men [*i.e.* men] shall be forgiven for all their sins and blasphemies, but the man who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will not get forgiveness for ever, but lies under the guilt of an act of eternal sin.*

The parallel in Q (Matt. xii. 32, Luke xii. 10) runs : "If any one speaks a word against the Son of Man, he shall be forgiven, but if he speaks against the Holy Spirit, he shall

* Western MSS. omit 'for ever' and in this are probably right. But 'eternal' remains and Matthew's parallel shows that this was original in Mark.

not be forgiven." * I suspect that Mark has the wording nearest to the original and that "speaking against the Son of Man" is a mistranslation or careless reading of Mark's phrase about the sons of men. But since Q reproduces a tradition treating blasphemy against the Son of man as forgivable and contrasting it with the unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the tradition must have been so strongly supported that the Church groups could not reject it. The agreement of Mark and Q thus makes the second half of the sentence one of the best authenticated sayings of Jesus. We should interpret it as one of those purposeful exaggerations with which preachers, especially in the East, seek to drive their point home.

The late C. W. Emmet attempted to soften the severity of this united witness by taking the Lucan or Q version as the original (*Lord of Thought*, p. 243). Even in Luke, however, the text is still so strong that he felt compelled to minimize it by the exegesis that this "is a solemn statement of inevitable consequence, which must follow on certain states of mind so long as they remain." It is not easy to maintain this, for the Lucan text "if any one speaks a word" does not normally suggest a continuing state. Yet, if we concede that the reference is to those who in face of plain manifestations cynically and deliberately persist in denying God's goodness, we should still hope that even for such the next life would bring a place for repentance. In the course of Christian history the Church has certainly been convinced of the forgiveness here on earth of many who for long periods of their earlier life put themselves into exactly that attitude of cynical denial. We may be thankful that experience contradicts the saying. But down the ages how much self-torture might have been avoided if the three passages had not been there!

We are restive when we read "Fear rather him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Matt. x. 28, Luke xii. 5—Q). Many commentators take the text as meaning God. If so, it makes the old mistake of concentra-

* This is as Harnack reconstructed Q. Matthew adds "neither in this world nor the world to come." See also p. 217.

ting on His power rather than His goodness, doubly mistaken indeed, since it concentrates on His power to destroy. We could wish for a finer incentive to loyalty and a happier description of God.

All these texts about Gehenna, rejection and retribution arouse the same sense of disquiet. They represent justice as it was then conceived, and were credible enough of human kings, though here and there the reader may well wonder if contemporaries did not feel that some of the sentences were heavy in proportion to the offence. But they do not fit the Christian view of God. Further, they have an ominous kinship with the Indian doctrine of *karma*, the mechanical reaping of exactly the harvest you have sown. Anyone who, over against the *karma* theory, has had to think out the Christian message of forgiveness, will tell you that, for all its seeming insistence on morality, the doctrine of *karma* is immoral. God is only moral if He redeems, and He can only redeem if He forgives. If God is personal and loving, concerned with human persons whom He would lead into His own perfectness, it must be His way, His nature, His glory, to hold on to them and refuse to let them go. He can never regard them as legal cases to be tried, sentenced and done with: as Father He must "spread out His hands all the day to a disobedient people." Already the prophet of Isaiah xliii. 22 f. had more than a passing glimpse of this, for he speaks thus in the name of God: "You have made me serve with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities. I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions *for my own sake*"—tremendous words these last four! The prophet saw that God is untrue to His own being, to say nothing of His desire yearning over men, unless He blots out transgressions. The same thought is the centre of the exultant message of Romans iii. 26, "that he might be δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πιστέως Ἰησοῦ, that is, if we may attempt to render the pregnant idiom into English, "righteous and the righteouser of him who has faith in Jesus." By the repetition of the word Paul insists on his great principle that God can only be righteous Himself, in so far as He makes men righteous by redemption.

"A truly good God cannot judge," said a friend during a discussion in my Church. If "judge" be used in the sense of dividing the sheep from the goats, dismissing the sheep to bliss and the goats to punishment from which there is no recall, the paradox is true and profound. If God cannot heal the sin of His children, and there is nothing for it but to condemn, He will condemn with a Father's pain, for which such expressions as "destroy," "Gehenna," "fire unquenchable," make no allowance. E. F. Scott has some words as final as they are simple:

> There must be something in each human being which is worthy of our love and reverence, for God is the Father of all. . . . Of this belief we find scarcely a trace in Jewish or Pagan thought, but for Jesus it is fundamental. (*Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 38.)

The obligation to treat all with love and reverence must apply more fully to the Father than to us, for His nature is above ours, "as the heavens are higher than the earth." But is that consistent with some of the sayings we have just reviewed?

Scott is also right that "for Jesus it is fundamental." In *The Lord of Thought* Miss Dougall has described the questioning anguish of his immediate predecessors as they wrestled with the Jewish theory that suffering, private and national, here or hereafter, was inflicted by God in judgment. Yet there were answers in the intuitions of the Second Isaiah and others of the prophets and psalm-writers. While the preceding thinkers had missed these, Jesus had discovered them and used them joyfully to form the central fibre of his message. Our Father in heaven makes His sun to rise upon the evil and the good and sends His rain upon the just and the unjust. The followers of Jesus are to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. The father in the story of the Prodigal Son concentrates in one figure a variety of scattered sayings about free forgiveness. These must have come like water in the desert to those whose every spiritual instinct cried out for mercy on the wandered sheep, and who were struggling to rise above the

traditional dogma of God's vengeance on sin. Jesus lived in friendship with publicans and sinners and they and the harlots pressed into the Kingdom as He made them understand its meaning. He would have men forgive till seventy times seven. If therefore He spoke the verses which deal with retribution, they were not in line with the most original movement of His thought.

What then are we to do with the problem?

The Fundamentalist will solve it by accepting all these sayings and defending their morality and the morality of their view of God because they came from Jesus. Though he forbade it to a disciple, Jesus was entitled to describe the Pharisees as "fools," just because he was the Son of God who "knew what was in man." From his lips even "offspring of vipers" was legitimate. Fortunately a good many even of those who suppose themselves to be Fundamentalists will exercise that unconscious higher criticism which in all ages has been the salvation of the humble and holy men of heart and will forget that these awkward verses are there.

Our affection for the story of Jesus and our memory of the debt we can never pay would urge us to do the same. But the spirit of Jesus is the spirit of truth and these passages vitally concern the popular idea of God. For there are some, and they among the leaders, who will not forget, but will emphasize them, and will teach, now with hard assurance, now with a sense of perplexing duty, that God is like that. Then the sensitive and younger people will draw away from Him, and perhaps in their hour of need they will encounter no one to tell them that these are misrepresentations. The adherents of the great religions of the East are already basing hostile argument upon these and similar texts.*

If then we feel (*a*) that our view of God's character is the real fundamental of religion and (*b*) that God cannot be

* For instance, S. M. Zwemer, the well-known missionary to Moslems, mentions that Moslems in India asked him whether Jesus' "conduct towards the Scribes and Pharisees, using the most opprobrious and abusive epithets, tended to prove unimpeachable conduct." *Report of Visit to Mesopotamia and India* (1924).

like that, we shall consider whether we can be contented to explain that the reporters misunderstood Jesus and interpolated their own sub-Christian ideas.

Can we lay all, or practically all, these sayings at the reporters' door? Miss Dougall and C. W. Emmet advocated this solution in *The Lord of Thought* (S.C.M.), a book whose frankness and suggestiveness makes us sorrow that their teaching on earth is done. Emmet wrote:

> Christ, then, brought to the world for the first time in its clearness the good news of the Fatherhood of God. The question before us is whether with this he combined other conceptions of God. . . . Either Jesus was not clear-sighted enough to see the contradiction, but retained the inherited and contemporary ideas side by side with his own new vision; or the apparent contradiction does not belong to the original teaching, but is an accretion which has crept in during some of those various stages through which Christ's words passed before they reached their present form. (P. 235.)

At the end of the next chapter he summed up thus:

> Jesus emphasizes again and again the truth that man has his lot in a moral universe, the laws of which cannot be evaded; what a man soweth, that shall he also reap. But he markedly avoids the language of contemporary Judaism which represents God as taking a fierce vengeance on evil-doers, whether here or hereafter. A very few phrases are attributed to him which might suggest that he occasionally shared this attitude, but *they can all be readily explained as later glosses*, added in oral tradition or by the Evangelists. Here, as elsewhere, his conception of God is harmonious and self-consistent. (P. 249. The italics are mine.)

Miss Dougall gave the same idea a wider range:

> The Jews had to let the Romans execute him. . . . And those of them who pressed into the Church after his death combined to build him a magnificent sepulchre

> by insisting that he was himself that implacable Being who would soon come to destroy his enemies and theirs, that condemning Judge whom they so desired to see in the heavens. . . . We can easily understand and participate in the desire of his generation to qualify his message by the intrusion of their own hostilities. (P. 124.)

Jesus, that is, uttered *none* of the sayings which we do not like, but the Christians, acting individually or corporately, sowed the tares of current paganism—which for this purpose includes much current Judaism—amid the pure wheat of his message.

This seems an exaggeration which history can scarcely accept:

(*a*) It involves the drastic excision of more recalcitrant material than Emmet's argument appeared to realize. One or two of his interpretations did not take enough account of the context. It might be true to say of the Woes on the Pharisees that "This is a warning of inevitable consequence coming upon certain classes as the result of their attitude towards life; the 'woe' is a statement, not a curse or a prayer for vengeance." But this does not entirely justify the note of hard generalization and of final abandonment.

Again, *The Lord of Thought* fails to recognize that the warnings of divine wrath and retribution are part of a mental attitude which now and then reveals itself in the passages quoted a few pages back about reward, the readiness of God to yield to importunity, or the assumption of preferential treatment for the followers of the Messiah and of calamity for the heathen.

(*b*) *The Lord of Thought* saves the credit of the teaching of Jesus at the expense of his lucidity and his capacity to impress the mind of his disciples. Even though it is improbable historically, the thesis is reasonable, if Jesus was a man. However unfortunate, it was natural that his disciples should misunderstand in some measure:—the same has happened to many prophets and saints. The thesis becomes much more difficult if he was God the Son. For on that

doctrine his purpose in coming to earth was to bring deity into human life, to establish in the Church a tradition of revelation flowing down the ages as a river of living water. Yet according to *The Lord of Thought*, at the earliest date and by those in close contact with the Incarnation of God the stream was polluted with these illegitimate interpolations, and the words of the Lord were twisted to mean exactly what he did not intend. This theory involves something like the failure of the Incarnation. God the Son would seem to have failed where success mattered most.

(*c*) If it be true that those who compiled the Gospel record misunderstood Jesus in so comprehensive a way; if above all they went so far astray from the conception of God which he taught, we must ask whether they were qualified to testify that Jesus was divine. It is on their conviction, original and classic, that the Church founds its preaching of the divine Lord. If they were wrong about God can we trust them to know what was involved in calling Jesus the Son of God? When they were incapable of a continuous grasp of the ideas of fatherhood and forgiveness, central to the Christian teaching of God's nature, were they capable of doing justice to the evidence which has led men to believe that Jesus was God in the flesh?

Such an explanation as that of *The Lord of Thought* stirs up as many perplexities as it allays.

The fact is that these vulnerable passages for which there is good documentary authority possess a certain kinship and coherence. What is more, there are other verses not open to the same criticism but belonging to the same period and fashion of belief which as it were dovetail into these passages and so fix them to their place amid the more convincing reminiscences of Jesus. They seem natural in a teacher, albeit the greatest religious teacher in history, who lived, thought and spoke in the atmosphere of contemporary Palestine. The errors are just those we should expect a prophet to make in this atmosphere, errors which it would be well-nigh impossible entirely to escape—the nationalism of his people, their crude handling of opponents, their subconscious assumption that those of alien religion were to

some extent disqualified for the privilege of God's love, and that the new Kingdom would have the "twelve tribes of Israel" as its foundation.* But all this seems incompatible with the doctrine of the sinlessness or of the absolute perfection of Jesus' life and character.

As an illustration of a parallel difficulty which seems to cut across this doctrine we may take a typical instance of historical reconstruction. F. C. Burkitt wrote of the cleansing of the Temple and the day following:

> On the Monday He goes into Jerusalem to set the Temple right, relying on the power of God to carry His programme through. Nothing shall be impossible to Him, and woe to anything that disappoints His expectations! The next day, when Peter is inclined to gloat, his Master tells him to trust in God—and to forgive, if he have any grievance! Was Jesus beginning to repent of His violent action of yesterday? Did He think *He* had been too hasty? . . . His action on the Monday morning, the Cleansing of the Temple itself, shows hope displayed in vigorous, if rather impracticable, action. But He, Jesus, is the first to see that it is no good. . . . The first sight of the chafferers and marketers while He was surrounded with a crowd of Galilean followers, who were at least enthusiastic, if not very intelligent, had moved Him to attempt a change . . . but it is not long before He is convinced that the whole spirit of Jerusalem is against Him. (*Journ. Theol. Stud.*, 1924, p. 389.)

The supposition that Jesus might regret action He had taken is, I suggest, legitimate in regard to a human prophet, but incongruous for the Son of God, the incarnation of deity. Burkitt's conjecture may or may not be a good one—to me it does not seem very good—but it is one of a class quite common among those trying to reconstruct the story of Jesus from the fragments of information that have come down to us. Are we to rule out all such conjectures because they

* Matt. xix. 28, Luke xxii. 30—Q.

conceive Jesus as liable to mistake? Shall we serve truth by erasing material which does not uphold the doctrine that Jesus was the perfect revelation of God? Von Hügel in the latter part of the quotation on p. 102 came dangerously near to proposing that we should allow doctrine to dictate our treatment of the documents. This will scarcely satisfy the scientific spirit.

Speaking generally, the present generation, educated and religious of temper, but not committed to the doctrines of the Church, will give its verdict that on the evidence obtained through His biographers Jesus was a man subject to misunderstandings like our own and with a moral sensitiveness in places imperfect, simply because it was human. For many this verdict—in such contrast with old belief—will add attraction to his figure and authority to his example.

It is worth while to quote one or two sentences from an article by J. S. Bezzant:

> . . . the records cannot possibly establish the negative of sinlessness which the certainly authentic saying, "Why callest thou me good?" makes clear that He would never have claimed for Himself.
>
> . . . the ethical teaching is not all on the same level. [The reader] occasionally meets with sayings and a tone which cause his moral consciousness uneasiness . . . he will at least hesitate to assert that every saying in the teaching of Jesus bears upon it the stamp of infallible authority or the sanction of God. (*Hibbert Journal*, July 1926.)

Those who agree with these sentences and with the general argument of this chapter will find it impossible to hold the doctrines either of the sinlessness or of the divinity of Christ in their traditional form.

One or two things remain to be said to complete the discussion:

(1) Those who favour the view put forward in *The Lord of Thought* may be inclined to charge it against this and the

previous chapters that I reject as legend passages which seem to support the doctrine that Jesus was God the Son, and arbitrarily retain as historic the passages which indicate that he was liable to mistake and therefore not divine. The challenge has a certain justification. Criticism cannot but be somewhat arbitrary. One must use one's own criteria—whether wisely or unwisely only time can prove. The test of a new estimate of history is its acceptance or rejection by subsequent generations. But I do not think that my criteria are arbitrary to the point of being illegitimate.

To begin with, it is well known—the authors of *The Lord of Thought* would have been the last to deny it—that many arguments for the divinity of Jesus have been manufactured. This was true of the controversies around the great Councils of the fourth century; we have seen the process at work in the Fourth Gospel and in the birth stories and other additions or suppressions of Matthew and Luke. Since the remaining evidence of the same type may always be due to the tendency of the Church to recast stories and phrases to justify its faith, the inquirer must put it to the severest test. The doctrine of the Incarnation offers to modern thought a challenge so uncompromising that the thinker is bound to look around for other explanations and only to accept the doctrine if it seems impossible to explain the evidence otherwise. He must first take the Gospels verse by verse and then with reverence and the longing for truth must contemplate them section by section and as a whole. Probably most students will need to repeat this double examination many times. But at long last it is permissible to form a judgment of the whole, and some of us believe that we have reached a stage when we are bound to take permission to form a judgment and for the sake of others to declare it. The judgment is that, in spite of many riddles unresolved, the evidence seeming to prove that Jesus was God the Son is not really conclusive.

On the opposite side stand the passages to which we may be accused of giving unfair preference, those which tell against the doctrine that Jesus was perfect, or that he was God the Son, with both a divine and a human nature. Such

passages the traditional Christianity of the first centuries would find it difficult to accept. Matthew's version of the Marcan inquiry, "Why do you call me good?" shows the Church at work improving an awkward saying. And every trace of such sayings only remains in our Gospel stories because the orthodox tradition found them too firmly fixed for alteration. How much was altered—not of dishonest intent, but because the Church must unify its apologetic—we shall never know. But when we attach importance to the traces remaining, we are well within our historic right.

Again certain passages which on other grounds would cause the early Church to stumble would be unlikely to survive unless they were good history. The story of the Syro-Phenician woman must have jarred upon Gentile readers and would be likely to be dropped.* Earlier in the chapter I have several times shown cause for believing a passage under criticism to be genuine. There are some which a later generation was incapable of inventing.

Yet another section of the evidence which does not harmonize with the doctrine of divinity is that in which Jesus seems to share the prejudices of his people and time. From their nature these verses may be interpolated by a primitive Church which had carried over its prejudices into the new faith. The contention of *The Lord of Thought* is that this covers them all without exception. Some sayings are undoubtedly due to this cause. But there are strong reasons for the judgment that a stubborn residue is left, too numerous, too germane, too naturally in concord with the main tone of the Gospel tradition to be wiped out as interpolation. On this passage or that we may hesitate, but the residue resists the attempts to explain it away.†

(2) Orthodox apologists frequently contend that in one inspired by so keen a moral sense and with so lofty an ideal the absence of any indication of penitence is a proof of divinity. It is hard to sustain this contention as long as we

* Luke actually does drop it, but see note p. 117.

† While those who follow *The Lord of Thought* are justified in criticizing thus, it is plain that those who have never protested against regarding these awkward passages as characteristic of Jesus cannot blame me for using them as evidence.

believe that Jesus asked the question, "Why do you call me good?"

Jerome preserves an interesting parallel. He quotes from the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* the statement that when the mother and brothers of Jesus urged him to go with them and be baptized by John, Jesus answered, "What sin have I done, that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless perhaps this very thing that I have said is an ignorance?" (*i.e.* unless the thought that I have done no sin is in itself an imperfection). The authority is not first-rate, though the survival of so unorthodox a tradition is impressive in itself. It would be like Jesus to speak so.

Even if we brush these passages aside, it is not convincing to urge that the Gospels never mention that Jesus was penitent. The penitence of one as conscious of communion with the Father as was Jesus must have been too delicate for his closest disciples to estimate. Nor is the penitence of a good man something about which he will talk readily to others. What he has to say, he says to God.

A woman once asked Wilberforce whether, absorbed as he was in his campaign against slavery, he had time to think about his soul. His reply has spiritual truth behind it: "Madam, I don't so much as remember that I have a soul." Jesus too may well have been so preoccupied with his mission as to have little thought to spare for what we ordinarily call penitence. This is an instance in which the argument from silence is peculiarly misleading.

Besides, when all is added up, there is next to nothing in the teaching of Jesus about the need for penitence in others. It was John the Baptist, and not he, who made confession of sin a preliminary to baptism. The story of the Pharisee and the publican is rather a protest against self-righteousness than a demand for systematic humiliation.

It was repentance to which Jesus called men, not penitence. The word used in the Greek Testament means simply "to change the mind," and the word which ran in double harness with it was "to turn again," which the Authorized Version wrongly translates "to be converted." Jesus was anxious, not that men should brood over their sins, but that

with purpose transformed they should once for all turn their backs on them. He sought to make them change their direction, to persuade them to concentrate their gaze on God and follow the path of His will. In the same way his own purposes were concentrated on the purpose of his Father, and there was place in his mind for little else.

We shall be mistaken, therefore, if we expect to find any mention of the penitence of Jesus in the simple traditions of the Gospels.

(3) Finally, it will help us to see things in perspective if we remember that the sayings and attitudes we have criticized in the story of Jesus were in the literal sense inconsistencies. That is to say, they do not match the general colour of his thought and conduct. They are patches of old cloth on a new garment. The characteristic teaching of Jesus is that in which he broke away from the limitations of his time or where he showed his originality by the vivid emphasis he gave to truths others had taught. His real mind is opened to us in the parable of the Prodigal Son, or the sentences telling of the joy in the presence of the angels of God over one repenting sinner, of the need for forgiving till seventy times seven, and of the Father who sends sun and rain to all His children, unjust and just alike. Against that background the unqualified denunciations of the Pharisees are tints ill-harmonized, the results of the fallibility common to mankind, which now and then betrayed him. They do not represent his considered message, they are not part of his Gospel. So it is with the suggestion that the man of God will reckon with divine rewards. Though I think it unlikely, that may even have been a deliberate accommodation to the spiritual vernacular of his audiences. The idea that God would yield to importunity in prayer does not belong to Jesus' central intuitions; it is a piece of contemporary religion which it had not occurred to him to revise, and which taught the urgency of prayer in a way his hearers could understand. Just so his thought about race is expressed in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in the prediction that the Gentiles would enter into the Kingdom which the Jews refused, in the references to Naaman and the

widow of Sarepta, foreigners both, and in his welcome of faith and gratitude from those of alien stock. In contrast with this spirit his answer to the woman of Syro-Phenicia and the use of Gentiles and Gentile cities as exemplars of evil are like patches of a wrong shade which a man working in twilight finds dangerously ready to his hand. For Jesus had to work in twilight: original and unique as was his spiritual insight, he could not sunder himself from the conceptions of his age or speak a language entirely new.

But, as we shall have further cause to remember, it is Jesus who allows us, and indeed compels us, to criticize himself.

VI

Summary

Does the rest of the New Testament provide sufficient evidence of the life of Jesus on earth to compel us to revise the conclusions of earlier chapters?

Acts is a summary of important history and, though remarkable—especially in the first half—for the simplicity of its doctrine of Jesus, lays stress on miracles and 'judgments.' By its nature it cannot give what we need.

(Essential to review the qualifications of each author to give the testimony attributed to him about ideas so great.)

James has no help to offer. Hebrews shows an interest in the life of Jesus bounded by the standard teaching of the Church, but the author is handicapped by his preoccupation with sacrifice, which was already obsolescent.

Reasons why the Epistles of John, the Apocalypse and I Peter do not satisfy our requirements.

The Pauline Epistles. Greatness of Paul. His early date. But we must allow for—

(*a*) his mythology of intermediate 'dæmonic' powers;

(*b*) the want of system in his thinking and resultant confusion in his theology;

(*c*) his view of God sometimes sub-Christian, especially regarding "wrath" and judgment;

(*d*) the influence of the idea of sacrifice (though much less than in Hebrews), resulting in a theory of atonement no longer tenable;

(*e*) the change of atmosphere from that of the Gospels to that of isolated communities concerned with the mystical and spiritual more than the ethical. Danger of "Salvationism";

(*f*) Paul's lack of interest in the earthly life of Jesus.

The rest of the New Testament, therefore does not provide evidence which will override that of the Synoptics.

VI

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IN THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In all that I have so far said I have not forgotten that the Pauline Epistles were almost certainly written before the earliest of our Gospels and possibly before there was any large body of compilation such as Q, the second great source which underlay Matthew and Luke, or those smaller collections which we may guess that Mark took as his groundwork. It was necessary to deal first with the Gospels because they supply us with the history of the Christian origins and particularly with that picture of Jesus which the Church has always treated as the foundation for the theology of the Epistles. But as written documents the Pauline Epistles were prior to the Gospels.

It is this priority which lends peculiar importance to the fact that these Epistles support the statements and anticipate the spirit of the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. They do not of course support every single article and they express their devotion in phrases different from those by which the Creeds attempt to exclude the possibility of error, but with a little help from the Church during the two generations immediately following, that is to say, with the addition of certain deeds and sayings of the Fourth Gospel, the thought about Jesus which they express does provide a *prima facie* foundation for the Creeds as a whole The same is true of the Apocalypse and the other Epistles, with the exception of James.

Just here, however, perplexity arises. To a nineteenth-century Church which was content to smooth away inconsistencies by processes of kindly harmonization it never occurred to think that the Gospels and the Epistles were

not in all respects allies. For us, however, criticism has brought out in both, but notably in the Gospels, elements hitherto unregarded which have set them in partial antithesis. It is as if two witnesses called for the same side should fail to corroborate one another under cross-examination. Christianity is a historic religion. The writers of the Epistles are assured that their doctrine is based on history. But what history, and to what extent did it coincide with the history given by the Gospels? The study of the Gospels has left us with many questions, and indeed with a presumption against the doctrine which their authors held. Does the rest of the New Testament provide sufficient indication of the nature of the life of Jesus to compel us to revise that presumption and accept the doctrine of the Church? In this chapter we shall seek to estimate the degree to which the Epistles contradict or support the conclusions so far reached.

We must begin with a date well after the Pauline Epistles, that of the writing of Acts. (If we place Luke about A.D. 75, which is full early—see p. 89—we shall have to date Acts at least five years later.) For the Acts of the Apostles is the only string on which we can thread the jewels of the Church's treasure. Unfortunately, like the strings of many necklaces, it is too slender for stones of such price. In spite of the general commendation (significantly qualified as to details) which Harnack gives to Luke as a historian, it is hard to regard the Acts as an authority adequate for the weighty problems in whose solution we are still compelled to use it. Acts has many miracles. Some of these may be slight enhancements of unusual narratives. Others are summarizing, conventional descriptions of healings like those we should treat as editorial in Luke's Gospel. The residue must be estimated one by one. The author, and his readers no less, interpreted the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira as judgments on their sin. Indeed the first half of the book sets much store by 'judgments.' The death of Judas was a retribution, Simon Magus is in terror of some visitation which our text does not define, Elymas receives his deserts in a stroke of tem-

porary blindness, and the angel of the Lord smites Herod amid his insolent acceptance of divine honours (i. 18, viii. 24, xiii. 11, xii. 23).

As in the Gospel, Luke here places the Resurrection appearances near Jerusalem, but differs by making them last for forty days (see p. 82). He is bold enough to depict the Christian group at the Ascension watching Jesus as he moved across the sky, while two angels, who had joined them where they stood, explained that at his second coming he would return in exactly the same way. It was natural for that age to think that the sky contained a heavenly hinterland.

The speaking with tongues in Chapter ii arouses question. Luke plainly intended to convey to his readers that there was a miracle of intelligible communication. It has often been pointed out that this is not the representation which we find in I Corinthians. There is no doubt that Paul's is the truer picture. Unfortunately the chapters on the Resurrection appearances and Pentecost cover (in the two senses of the word) exactly the crisis which the Christian historian would give anything to understand. For the obvious limitations of the writer's mind make it impossible to place perfect confidence in his story of what happened.

Over against the credulity there is a noteworthy simplicity in the doctrine of Jesus expressed by the earlier speeches. Like other ancient historians, the author was probably ready to use speeches as the vehicle for the ideas which should be associated with the particular occasion.* Yet the speeches in Acts, and notably in the first half, refer to Jesus in language owing little to the Christology of the Epistles and well suited to a period at which the Church was still uncertain how to define the impression he had made.

When we remember how far the Epistles had carried their theology of Jesus, we are bound to remark the moderation, even the primitiveness, of the phrases in which Acts describes

* Many speeches in ancient historians are parallel, not to our newspaper reports of discourses delivered, but to the editorial leaders commenting on the subject or event.

him (see pp. 218 f.). The cause may be that, like so many following writers from A.D. 100 to 150, the author could not rise to the level of Paul's teaching; or perhaps, and more probably, that we have here the result of a Jewish-Christian source to which some scholars attribute the mass of Acts i.–xii.; but, however that be, the simpler phrasing does correspond with the way of describing Jesus that must have been common in the first decade after his death. Through some such stage of thought the first disciples must have passed. These primitive phrases are of real importance.

The book as a whole seems to have three main objects:

(*a*) To show that Christianity grew out of the best in Judaism and might well receive the tolerance which the Empire offered to the Jews. When the unbeliever objected that the Jews themselves had rejected this pretended Messiah, Acts gives the answer that, in doing so, they had manifestly rejected the loftiest anticipations of their own scriptures. Christianity was the rightful heir to the visions of the Old Testament.

(*b*) To record how frequently Christianity had already enjoyed the protection of Roman officials. It is the same purpose that in the Gospel leads Luke to insist on Pilate's threefold witness to the innocence of Jesus and on the trial before Herod which also vindicated him.

(*c*) To bring out the working of "the Spirit" as the dynamic power of the Church. Here again there are sufficient parallels in the Gospel.

To these three we may add what is a tendency rather than an object,—to minimize the antagonisms between the parties in the Church and to gloss away the conflicts through which Paul established his position over against the system favoured by the Jerusalem Church. The tone is reconciling and mildly official.

It would be optimistic to expect such a book to supply us with a psychology of the acceptance of the doctrine of Jesus as the divine Messiah risen from the dead, or of the subsequent development in the Church's worship and theology. The evidence that the author was the companion of Paul in some of his more important missionary

travel is stronger than that for the authorship of most books in the Bible, but the theological temper of Acts would lead no one to suspect any close association between author and Apostle. There is singularly little trace of the great themes of the Pauline Epistles; on the other hand, there are the notorious discrepancies between the Lucan story of parts of Paul's life and the same incidents as we see them in the rapid and allusive sentences from Paul's own pen.*

After the first three chapters there is no reference to the Second Coming, though from Paul's words and from the inferences we can base upon other New Testament passages we know that its expectation played a large part in the interest of the earliest groups,—so large that, when the Lord did not return, the leaders of the Church had to turn the edge of disappointment as best they could.

From Acts we learn little or nothing of the moral and doctrinal problems which called out so much of the Apostle's energy, brilliance, faith and will to suffer for his converts, and, while its history of the expansion of Christianity speaks of frequent conflicts, these are far more with the Jews outside than with the Judaizers inside the Church. Chapter xv treats the Jerusalem Council as a friendly and successful settlement, with the result that scholars have spent much dusty argument on the attempt to reconcile it with Paul's contrary story in Galatians ii. It is true that Acts has facts or omissions hinting at the antagonisms which the Epistles reveal, the severance from John, Mark and Barnabas, the defensive and anxious tone of the speech to the Ephesian elders, the absence of any mention of support from James and the Jerusalem elders once Paul was arrested, and the similar silence about fellowship with the Church in Rome after its members had gone out to welcome him with such enthusiasm. But these minor corroborations are like tiny points of light which emphasize the general darkness. It is obvious that the purpose and range of Acts are limited, that its space is inadequate for a history of the development of Christian thought, and that, while we can scarcely fail to notice the less than orthodox titles which it gives to Jesus,

* Notably in Gal. i. 16–ii. 14.

we shall look to it in vain for an explanation of the stages by which the Church came to worship him as the divine Lord.

For the rest we may begin with the non-Pauline writings.

We must once more ask the fundamental question,—by what they allow us to infer about their authors, do the non-Pauline documents appear intellectually and spiritually qualified to offer this stupendous testimony? And do they give the impression that the Churches, in and for which they were writing, were corporately fitted to originate or endorse this testimony?

It is worth while to emphasize that this question is fundamental, and indeed must be used as a principle guiding our inquiry. We trust some witnesses more than others; further, the degree of trust varies with the subject on which they speak. On a problem in electricity we should trust an electrician rather than a philosopher. For any testimony upon values the witness must persuade us that he has width of knowledge and the penetration required. In a discussion upon morality we should discount the witness of an immoral man. If the discussion turned on the interpretation of some great experience, personal or corporate, we should distrust the man who is stupid, particularly if he shows himself stupid in the subject of discussion. We should also reject the creature of contemporary conventions and superstitions,—obviously he cannot come to the discussion with an open mind. Orthodox Christology rests upon a judgment of supreme values, human and divine. Some of the support for this the Church has always drawn from the Epistles and the Apocalypse of John. We are bound to ask: Were the authors of these books competent to estimate the values of the life of Jesus?

This standard will rule out the Jewish-Christian party from the start. If Jesus was the limited personality they tried to follow, he could not be the revelation of the God of the nations; if they understood the Father so little as to think that circumcision and rules about eating with Gentiles were part of His plan of salvation, they were not capable of identifying the Son of the Father, should they

meet him upon earth. To state such a proposition about God and Jesus, it is necessary to have a sufficient understanding not only of Jesus but also of God's way with men.

With the possible exception of James, all the non-Pauline books come from circles which shared the central Pauline ideas.

James gives us no help at all. Its references to Jesus are so rare that it might be designed to show with how scant a Christology a Church could rub along. No wonder Luther, preoccupied with the Gospel of grace, called it an epistle of straw! It is valuable enough for practical religion but empty of doctrinal theology.

Hebrews was written well after the first blossoming of the Christian faith, and indeed was intended to recall those who had passed so far away from that period that they were losing the vividness of their conviction. It contains interesting traces of the early doctrine that Jesus attained divinity by the holy obedience of his life (ii. 9, v. 8),—a doctrine which the author hardly reconciles with the ideas of pre-existence he also cherished (i. 2, xi. 26).* For the most part he shares with the rest of the New Testament authors, from Romans to the end, their curious unconcern about the experience of Jesus on earth. Yet it is to his credit that he does make a few important allusions to those parts of the story which help out his theology. "The Lord was born of the tribe of Judah, he lived for a time a life lower than the angels, like us he was tempted, he was patient to endure the gainsaying of sinners, in the days of his flesh with bitter cries and tears he put up prayers and supplications to Him who could save him from death and was heard because of his submission. Thus, Son though he was, from what he suffered he learnt obedience and was made perfect. He offered himself and suffered without the gate. The message we proclaim goes back to his first preaching of salvation."

These references are in grateful contrast with the neglect of other writers, though they go little beyond the minimum Church tradition. It is plain that we owe to the same

* According to von Hügel, Hebrews "betrays an obscure and inadequate manner of conceiving His divinity."—*Essays and Addresses*, II. p. 192.

tradition the four statements of sinlessness (iv. 15, vii. 26, ix. 14 and 28). They are not based on evidence known to the author but upon the general teaching of the Church. The author reproduces this without question, and, beautiful as his spirit was, would scarcely have felt any incompatibility between his assertion and some of the passages we discussed in the last chapter.

Everybody recognizes that his mind is subdued to the Rabbinic method in which his hand has worked, and for us that lessens his impressiveness. Like the schools of that day he attaches a curious validity to arguments from a misreading of Old Testament passages. The first chapter has several instances. The same uncritical method appears in the well-known section vii. 1–4 which dwells on the fugitive mention of Melchizedek in Genesis, and just because it is fugitive gives it mystical significance. In x. 5–7 he actually uses the repudiation of the sacrifice of animals in Psalm xl. 6 f. to rivet the sacrificial theory of the death of Jesus upon the thinking of the Church. Indeed as a witness for to-day the author suffers all along from his preoccupation with the sacrificial system. The interest in sacrifice was waning. The Jews were beginning to feel that it rested on an unspiritual conception of God.* After the fall of Jerusalem brought the Temple sacrifices to an end, they seem never to have attempted to revive them, and those more sensitive were no doubt relieved to be rid of a form of worship which had become repulsive. The more advanced among the Prophets and the composers of some of the Psalms had prepared such minds by proclaiming a religion which should have done with the offering of animals and be content with nothing less than the offering of the heart. Again, contact with the educated thought of Greece must have awakened many a Jew to the dirtiness and brutality of animal sacrifice † while at the same time this contact promoted the wider, deeper vision of God which made sacrifice an irrelevance, if not a misrepresentation. It was unfortunate, therefore,

* Cf. the scribe's words in Mark xii. 33.

† In India you can see how dirty and brutal it is. The more refined and spiritually minded Indians disavow it openly.

that just when the conception underlying sacrifice was losing its hold, the author of Hebrews should concentrate upon the proof that the revelation of God in Christ was its fulfilment. The dependence upon sacrifice inevitably makes him regard the Christian's relation to God as resting upon a transaction, with the result that in vi. 4–6 and x. 26 he teaches the un-Christian doctrine, rife later in the early Church, that those who fell after partaking of redemption could never be renewed.

For one who can imagine himself back into the Levitical presuppositions, the book has many beauties, but for minds out of touch with the Pentateuch the first ten chapters have only a limited appeal. I cannot see that this involves the loss of anything essential to faith. Be that as it may, the book is too remote from the time of Jesus to show us how the Church came to think of him as the great sacrifice for sin, or to justify the doctrine by tracing it back to any word of Jesus himself.

The Johannine Epistles are to be linked with the Fourth Gospel and are therefore separated by sixty to eighty years from the crucifixion. They champion a Christology already far developed. In the background is a conflict with heresy so bitter that it is natural to use 'anti-Christ' of the opponents (I John ii. 18, iv. 3 and II John 7) while II John 10 directs Christians not to receive into the house, or even to greet,* anyone who does not bring "this doctrine," "for he who greets him, shares in his wicked works." The Johannine insistence on love has meant much to the Church, but these passages make us feel that its scope is confined to those willing to submit themselves to the approved presentation of Christianity. The author, like the authors of the Fourth Gospel, does not seem to have appreciated the wide range of God's interest and mercy.

As an authority for a doctrine of Incarnation likely to persuade minds of to-day the Apocalypse carries its own condemnation. Jesus has disappeared into a distant oblivion

* The Greek for 'greet,' literally 'rejoice,' really amounts to 'Good morning!' or 'Good-bye!' The Christian must not say 'Rejoice' to the heretic, for that might be wishing success to his heresy (see p. 197).

and in his place we have the apocalyptic figure of the first chapter, impressive but unreal. The author is so taken up with his symbolism and the imminence of the coming of the Judge in glory that he loses all connection with the historic origins of Christianity. His view of God is not more merciful than that of the barbaric traditions of the plagues of Egypt, with which his own plagues are matched. On the man who could represent Jesus as warring against the Nicolaitans with the sword of his mouth (ii. 16), or watching with approval the torture of idolaters in fire and pitch (xiv. 10), much of the teaching of the historic Jesus had been wasted. In the main the author was reproducing the hallowed conventions of previous apocalyptic, but at the point when he or his predecessors adapted them by inserting the sentences about Jesus, they imported these conventions into Christianity—unfortunately the Church has never repudiated their importation—and showed how little they could be trusted to identify God manifested in the flesh.*

In protesting thus, I should not wish to forget the passages of genuine Christian inspiration which these books contain. Even a farrago such as the Apocalypse can give us guidance for to-day, if we are prepared with unsparing hand to cut away the sections in which God is misconceived. But at present I am seeking to find whether any of the literature of the New Testament is qualified to unveil or justify the process by which the Christians came to regard Jesus as God.

The first Epistle of Peter is full of genuine religion. The sincerity and conviction of the writing make beauty of the whole, and to its English translation we owe phrase after phrase which will always command our affection. But

* C. H. Dodd calls it "a work deeply Jewish and only superficially Christian." He adds later: "the typical apocalypse is full of a vindictive gloating over the downfall of national enemies, and an unhealthy indulgence of personal and corporate pride and cupidity. The New Testament apocalypse is tainted with these vices no less than some of its Jewish congeners, and perhaps it would have been well for Christendom if those great scholars of the Eastern Church who disliked its presence in the Canon had had their way." (*Authority of the Bible*, pp. 187, 189.)

there is nothing about the book which suggests Peter, and it is probably a summary of the Christian message composed by someone soaked in Paulinism,—long enough after Paul to allow the reflective mind to set the articles of the Christian faith in a reconciling perspective and to dwell on their rich associations. Its use of the shepherd idea may even link it with the Fourth Gospel.

It has one blemish. It reflects the self-centred interest of the Church in her own salvation. The readers have the honour that falls by right to believers, they are a chosen race (ii. 7, 9) and it was for them that the prophets wrought out their great message (i. 10–12). Jesus would have reminded them that many are called but few chosen, that the first shall be last and that God's banqueting house is to be filled with queer people out of the highways and hedges.

It is a different story when we come to Paul. Here is one of the master minds of the world, an intelligence to be set alongside Plato, a spirit to compare with Francis and a persistent heroism like that of Livingstone. His letters show that while he was imaginative, courteous and attractive as a man, he was matched by very few as a minister of God. Considering his nervous passion and the opposition he had to battle down, he was singularly free from bitterness. If Paul had not been overshadowed by Jesus—an impossible supposition, for it was that overshadowing which allowed and inspired him to grow and flower as he did—he would have been reckoned one of the four or five religious leaders of the world. There was a decisiveness about his acts and teaching which gave token of a maturity of soul reached slowly and through much travail. To-day a remarkable proportion of his underlying ideas is alive and in the key that fits our modern needs.

Some have even charged it against him, and Christianity, that he was the maker of its central doctrines. It is certain that he was used at the hour of crisis to liberate the Christian movement from the shackles by which most of the earlier Christians would have fettered it. We owe to Paul's

comprehension and sanctified pugnacity the preservation of much that was peculiarly original in the appeal of Jesus.

For us it is of special moment that he was contemporary with the death of Jesus. In the first instance he watched the Church in order to persecute more effectively, and from his mind as he reveals it to us in his letters we can be sure that he studied the new heresy with the care of one who broods over the war plans of the foe. That may account for his claim that after he was converted he received nothing from the older apostles; all that they had to give him he had assimilated before; but now the vision on the Damascus road had set it in a light which convinced him of everything he had hitherto denied. We know how he was converted and his letters are the earliest written evidence for the existence of Christianity. From the hour of his conversion he was a lonely figure, for he saw meanings in the new "way" that even the companions of the Lord had not seen before, and in comparative loneliness he was destined to remain; we may doubt whether many of the members of the Churches whose ministry weighed so heavily upon him, entered with comprehending sympathy into the soaring movements of the faith he sought to impart. But it would surely be bad history to make him the creator of dogmatic Christianity; its shaper he may have been, but the elements must have been ready to hand from the time before and around Pentecost. It would be equally mistaken to forget that his Epistles would not have been preserved if there had not been members of the Churches who understood them enough to prize them in the face of depreciation. There was interest sufficient to reproduce their teaching in books such as I Peter. Next to Jesus Paul has been the dominant figure in Christian history.

Yet are we bound to deduce his conclusions from what he shows us of his experience? In the Gospels we have seen reason to believe that Jesus was what we should ordinarily regard as a human figure. Are we to set aside that conclusion because of what we find in Paul, and in that primitive Church of which, though transcending it, he is still

typical? Assuredly there were limitations to his capacity to give the evidence that we to-day should seek.

(*a*) His training in the Rabbinic schools left its stamp upon his mental processes. Sections like Rom. v. 12–21, vii. 1–3 and Gal. iv. 21–31 show how differently his mind worked from ours. Further, he had a temperament at once imaginative and pessimistic; apart from Christ he saw no goodness in the world and no hope of escaping sin and its judgment-doom. These two characteristics inclined him not only to accept, but also to make play with, the Jewish mythology of intermediate dæmonic powers. Of late much attention has been paid to this subject.* There is no doubt that Paul, like most Jews of his time—to say nothing of Hellenistic polytheism—believed in a world of spirits of many ranks and potencies floating between man and God. Those inquirers who leaned towards what afterwards became Gnosticism, thought that some of these spirit-hierarchies were the only means of making connection with God, since they conceived God as lifted far above any direct relation to insignificant and unworthy human kind. Others, again, tended to lay greater stress on the idea that these princes of the air were malevolent interrupters of communion with God and of man's well-being, like the "atmospherics" which disturb wireless transmission. Anyone who knows the great non-Christian civilizations will identify these capricious and usually evil intelligences with the "spirits" which fill so large a place in the religious underworld of the common people of India, China and Africa. (The gambler's idea of luck and the mascot of the racing motorist belong in their essence to the same thieves' kitchen of superstition.) The missionary knows that the

* Sydney Cave's *The Gospel of St. Paul*, especially Chap. IV, will be useful to English readers. His experience of the Mission field helps him to give due weight to many passages. Here and there he may press his principle of interpretation too far. Anderson Scott is also excellent (*Christianity according to St. Paul*, pp. 28–38).

"Dæmonic" had not our modern meaning. It meant a "numinous" being, *i.e.* a mysterious, more or less powerful influence outside ourselves. This might be good as well as bad. Socrates *e.g.* spoke of his "dæmon" which gave him guidance, much as the average Christian would speak of the Holy Spirit or a Quaker of the "inner light."

convert cannot break free at once from the mental chains of heathenism and that it is of little use to deny the existence of these spirits. The only message which the convert can at once accept is that, if these spirits really exist, God is stronger and can bring their activities to naught.

So Paul still continued to believe in this intermediate world. To it belong beings variously entitled the "thrones" and "dominions," the "principalities" and "authorities," the "elements of the world" and the "angels," the "world-rulers of this darkness" and the "spiritual manifestations of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Col. i. 16, ii. 8, 18, 20; Gal. iv. 3, 9; Eph. ii. 2 and vi. 12.) But some modern expositors would go further and find personifications in such frequent Pauline terms as Wrath, Sin, Death, and even Law. Paul, they think, regarded these as created by God and sent forth to exercise a more or less independent function in the course of which they came into "relative opposition to God" (Ritschl). To interpret in this way does undoubtedly give point and clarity to many obscure verses. Be that as it may, the earlier quotations are sufficient evidence of Paul's belief in this "atmospheric" interruption. We think of Christianity as standing in shining purity over against the mythologies of paganism; modern research shows that Christianity had a modified mythology of its own.

This leads to two questions. First, was the man whose mind moved in this realm of demons and intermediate agencies fitted to comprehend all that was involved in the doctrine that Jesus was the incarnation of God? Paul quite seriously believed that, if women did not veil themselves, they might be exposed to the evil eye and evil desires of angels hovering over them in the meeting-place (I Cor. xi. 10). He had no doubt of a personal devil by whom he was hindered and persecuted (I Thess. ii. 18; II Cor. xii. 7). He thought that unseemly conduct at the Lord's Supper caused disease and death (I Cor. xi. 30), and that if he, with the Church, "handed over to Satan" an offender, the man would die (I Cor. v. 5). While the author of Second Isaiah had come to realize that the gods of the heathen were nought and vanity, figments of the human

imagination, Paul regarded them as devils, active and dangerous. Does not all this mythology mean that he held a different idea of God from any we can hold to-day? If so, is not his witness to an incarnation of God to that extent reduced in authority? We unhesitatingly reject Paul's background. Does that leave his interpretation of Jesus unaffected?

Second, does not the fact that Paul's mind was so much at home in this intermediate world of spirits help us to understand how he came to accept the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus? As we shall see later, Paul is never certain whether Jesus is equivalent to God or in some measure subordinate. In any case Jesus was an intermediary between God and man. Was it not easier for Paul to think of Jesus as a mediating incarnation when his thought already presupposed an intermediate realm of spirits? Was it not natural for him to meet the terrors of these hovering foes by a prince of life who, equal and yet not equal with God, should subdue these enemies and release men from fear? In other words is not Paul's theory of the Incarnation to some degree conditioned by his belief in intermediate beings?

(*b*) He was not a systematic thinker, nor was his philosophy balanced. He felt no obligation to co-ordinate his dominant ideas. Let anyone try to teach his doctrine of the Law in terms compatible with the ethic of to-day and he will appreciate what I mean. The prejudice bred of Paul's bitter disappointment under Pharisaism makes him unjust to the Law, though in inconsistent asides he admits its goodness. In the same way, though every now and then he manifests his debt to the prophets, the texts in which he treats the gift of the Spirit as an exclusively Christian grace would lead his readers to suppose that before the death of Jesus God had never given His Spirit to His children. He makes no intelligible distinction between "Christ in you" and the Spirit or between "living in the Spirit" and being "in Christ." * He brought the Gentiles

* Paul is probably more content to leave unresolved the confusion between the two ideas and functions because of the background of spiritual beings to which I have just referred. It was natural for him to assume some form of bridge between man and God.

into the Church on terms of complete equality and yet through Romans ix.–xi. bases his thought on the assumption that God was covenanted to favour the Jews. The failure to differentiate between the uses of "Lord" for God and for Jesus is evidence of the heavenly place in which the Church set Christ, but it is also typical of the failure of Paul to systematize his thinking. It may be that the failure is inherent in orthodox Christianity. There are sections where his mind seems taken up in contemplation of the Father, and less frequent sections where he seems to need nothing for faith beyond Christ crucified; in the main he regards Jesus as subordinate to the Father, and yet in worship he appears to turn indifferently to one or the other. It is thus impossible to study Paul's statements about God and Christ and about their mutual relation without admitting that the heights and depths which he reports after his exploration cannot be fitted together to make a coherent map of his religion.

Again, from one who put Jesus on a throne so exalted it is curious to read exhortations to his converts such as I Cor. iv. 16, "I urge you therefore to imitate me." * That surely would be unthinkable for the Christian of to-day, for instinct would restrain him from putting his own figure where that of Christ should stand alone. It is equally puzzling to read in Gal. iv. 14, 'You received me as a messenger of God, as Christ Jesus." Is it only a difference of self-consciousness, the frankness of a less sophisticated age, or does it mean that Paul could entertain ideas of the divine sonship which would not satisfy us,—that his doctrine of Jesus is not as exalted as the same words would be upon our lips?

A parallel confusion is found in his teaching of the Atonement. In spite of the immense importance Paul attached to the doctrine, he has never, as we shall see, thought through the question why it should be necessary. At one time (Rom. iii. 25) he conceived God as the compassionate author of atonement, at another, and that in the same chapter (iii. 5), as the Judge bringing punishment to bear.

* Or I Thess. i. 6, "You became imitators of us and of the Lord."

One cause of these confusions and illogicalities is the tendency of Paul's mind to be entirely absorbed in the subject which has engaged his attention at the moment. While he is pressing home an argument, he is inaccessible to other balancing convictions which his own letters show him to have held with almost equal strength and which, if remembered, would have prevented overemphasis. He lives in one aspect of Christianity at a time.

(*c*) Paul's view of God is sometimes sub-Christian. Here and there he pictures God, in His dealings with those who have opposed the Gospel or have persecuted its followers, as the disinterested judge under a penal code. In such a judgment Romans i. includes the heathen who had never heard the Gospel, but deserved their fate because they had not obeyed the guidance of natural religion. This representation is inconsistent with Christianity as the Church has come to interpret it. God is not disinterested, even towards the worst. The fact is that Paul had not broken with his Jewish origins sufficiently to feel discomfort at the thought of attributing to God the temper of retribution. Occasionally, it is true, he speaks of the Wrath (ὀργὴ) as something detached from God and working of its own might. In Rom. i. 18, however, it is not detached, but "the wrath of God" (ὀργὴ θεοῦ). This might be explained as the repulsion which a moral God must feel towards sin, without hostility to the sinner, though it is not the obvious meaning, yet this does not cover verses 24, 26 and 28, where Paul teaches that God manifested His wrath by "giving up" the idolaters to gross impurities and a mind beyond the moral pale,* or ix. 18, "whom He will, He pities; whom He will, He hardens." In iii. 5, however independent the "Wrath" may be, it is God who brings it into play, and this is one illustration among many to show that Paul made God in part responsible for the system of

* It is possible that this part of Rom. i. is not Pauline. Marcion omitted i. 19—ii. 1 and P. N. Harrison, whose study of the words characteristic of Paul has done so much to show that the Pastorals are not Pauline, finds that by the same tests this section (or most of it) appears to be an interpolation.

condemnation and destruction.* The radical trouble about "wrath" or retribution is that to inflict it God must have finally abandoned the motive of redemption in dealing with those whom once He called His children. Could anything be a sharper negation of that motive than to deliver up the heathen to greater wickedness?

It is not to God alone that Paul assigns these acts of retribution. In II Cor. ii. 14–16 the beautiful doxology "to God who leads us in triumph in Christ" is ruined by the continuation: "for we are the fragrance of Christ to those being saved and to those being lost, to the second a scent coming from death and pointing on to death, to the first a scent from life pointing on to life." (Moffatt translates, "a deadly fragrance that makes for death" and "a vital fragrance that makes for life." This brings out the painfulness of the metaphor still more forcibly.) It is surely a bitter irony to rejoice that the fragrance of Christ is to sinners like the threatening odour of the charnel-house. In v. 10 Christ sits on the judgment throne giving to good and bad their deserts according to the life in the body. II Thess. i. 6–10 speaks of Jesus as passing judgment on "those who do not know God and those who do not submit to the gospel of our Lord Jesus, who shall pay the penalty of age-long destruction from the presence of the Lord." Moffatt in his English translation prints these five verses as poetry and a proportion of the phrases are quoted from the Old Testament. But in quoting them from the Old Testament (or perhaps some apocalyptic hymn), the author made them his own and cannot escape their implications.†

The view of God's treatment of sinners in these passages, whether Paul pictures God as Himself presiding in judgment or as acting through the Son, is precisely the view

* Unless religious thinkers are prepared to accept a polytheistic dualism, the mythology of intermediate powers must inevitably throw back to God for its origin and claim from Him its paternity.

† Certain critics maintain with some reason that Paul did not write II Thessalonians. Whatever we should lose by this theory, it would be gain to think that he did not write these verses, or ii. 11 where God sends upon those being lost "an impulse to go astray leading them to trust themselves to falsehood" and so meet their doom.

which makes the substitutionary atonement necessary as an escape.

This false view of God is out of harmony with Paul's own experience at its best. He is obviously happier when he is looking to God as redeemer than as judge. He knows himself to be the chief of sinners, yet he has not been denied forgiveness and redemption. Will not God give to the heathen also the same chance of turning? Or there is that noble paragraph in which Paul writes that he could wish himself accursed from Christ if that could procure the salvation of his own people the Jews (Rom. ix. 1–5). There his affections have the upper hand, and so, as he thinks of kith and kin, his tone is different from that in which he refers to heathen or persecutors who have no individual existence for his thought. Much of our theology would be improved if our affections oftener had the upper hand. But can the Apostle write of the recall of his Jewish brethren with such longing and God have less care that His children should be redeemed? If it were so, would not Paul be like the "loving worm within its clod . . . diviner than a loveless God amid His worlds"? It is plain enough that in his conception of God, Paul is inconsistent, and this is not surprising if, as we saw reason to suspect, his theology of Jesus was also incompletely unified.

(*d*) The same criticism that was urged against Hebrews holds to a minor but quite definite degree against Paul. His use of the idea of "blood" shows that he continued in bondage to some of the presuppositions of animal sacrifice. That he develops the argument so little and almost always leaves it a suggestion, justifies the inference that Paul had gone further in revolt against the demand for sacrifice than had the author of the Hebrews. Everything that Acts tells us of his relation to the Temple taken with the absence of reference to it or to its altar in his Epistles, makes it unlikely that the years before his conversion had woven threads of reverent admiration around any of the Temple worship. To the author of Hebrews the conceptions underlying sacrifice still possess independent validity; with Paul sacrifice is only one of many metaphors. But he still

believed that Jesus was a sacrifice for sin. On this Eph. v. 2 is explicit, " as Christ loved you and delivered himself for a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Additional proof may be found by looking up in a concordance the words blood, cross, crucify and death.

It is of course a commonplace that Paul never uses words suggesting that Christ placated the wrath of God or " propitiated " Him. If we take his words which in classical Greek might involve propitiation and examine their use through the Greek translation of the Old Testament,* we learn that they are hardly ever used to mean that any physical or spiritual offering placated God, *i.e.* altered His mind or secured His forgiveness and favour. The Greek Old Testament must be our guide when we try to fix Paul's shade of meaning. It is plain too that Paul rejoiced to preach a spiritual acceptance of the death of Christ as the way of forgiveness and to glorify God as responsible for all the mercy of the plan of salvation (Rom. iii. 25) or as " in Christ reconciling the world to Himself " (II Cor. v. 19).

Yet Paul says more than that; indeed, holding his views, he was bound to say more. We are justified, he writes, " by the blood of Christ " or " by atonement through his blood " (Rom. v. 9, iii. 24 f.), he " purchased us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for us " (Gal. iii. 13) and " The one who did not know sin, He made to be sin for us " (II Cor. v. 21). Even so Paul did not say enough. Phrases like these were sufficient for readers all of whom assumed the validity of the sacrificial system and found it in accord with their religious thinking. In reading the words they interpreted them by their own training and theological presuppositions. As we know, during many centuries those of less spiritual outlook embodied their interpretations in crude theories that in substitution for sinners Christ was offered to the devil or to God's wrath. To-day we try to find Paul's real mind and we are sorely

* The words are *ἱλάσκομαι, ἱλαστήριον, ἱλασμός* and their compounds. Of 171 instances there are only six in which it can mean to placate disfavour or anger. Where it is not used of the "mercy seat" upon the ark or of sacrifice for atonement, it means "atone" without stating the person to whom atonement is made. When used in the passive it means simply "to be forgiven."

perplexed. He did not mean that Jesus "propitiated" God. But what *did* he mean?

We can rule out once for all the merely subjective explanations. It may be true that the effect of the Atonement is in the change it produces in us by bringing us into penitent acceptance of God's forgiveness and into identification with His standards. But Paul could never have been content with that. He was sure that, whatever happened in us, something happened outside us, something in the most important relation in which our life was lived. And therefore we are compelled to ask such questions as these :—What in the universe was altered, when Christ became a curse? What did God want with Christ—Christ dying—as a fragrant offering and sacrifice? Why did the sacrifice make the crucial alteration which it plainly did for Paul? The explanation is that Paul never dreamed of questioning the idea of mediating atonement. Every race believed in the efficacy of sacrifice in some form. The few thinkers who protested against it gave way, as thinkers do in India to-day, when a child lay at death's door. Relieved to excuse their momentary escape from theory by the urgencies of their women, they went off to the temple and did the proper thing. After all there might be something in it beyond the sounding-lines of logic. For the Jews since Maccabean times "the age . . . was saturated with the idea of the efficacy of the intercession of martyrs." * The need for that intercession lay in the feeling that God was angry with the nation and allowing or inflicting its sufferings in judgment for its sins. So Paul's insistence on the efficacy of Christ's death and his definition of it in terms of blood, shows that his mind was ruled by the axioms of atonement by sacrifice.

The fact is that modern theologians have made altogether too much play with the one great text, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (II Cor. v. 19). That was part of Paul's thought, a part always present, but he never resolved the inconsistency between it and the sacrificial metaphors. The substitutionary theory of the Atone-

* Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, p. 112.

S. PAUL, an Inspired APOSTLE.

4 Answer. The SACRIFICE of CHRIST IS THE SUPREME Revelation of THE DIVINE LOVE for us men. " He bare our sins in HIS OWN BODY " on the Tree.

ment was a legitimate attempt to clear up a doctrine which Paul had left impossibly vague.

Indeed it is likely that, if Paul had been challenged, he would have frankly accepted the substitutionary form of the argument. That is not of course to say that he would have worried enough about consistency to abandon the generous view of God which prevented him, as long as he could evade the challenge, from using full-blown substitutionary phrases. For Paul's theory of the Atonement was not spiritual, but a mixture of noble spirituality and current materialism. It can only be spiritualized by omitting certain of his most characteristic words. Something in the universe, he believed, was justifiably angry with the sinner. We are bound to press the question: was it these dæmonic world-forces, Wrath, Death, Law, or was it God? With most other Jews Paul would probably have replied "Both." But that makes it harder for us to admit Paul's competence in Christology. We do not think in terms of dæmonic forces or of a God whose attitude is transformed by one act of mediating sacrifice.

(*e*) In studying the Pauline Epistles by the side of the first three Gospels we detect a change in the moral atmosphere. We are no longer in the wind-swept, bracing uplands of the Synoptics, but in the ethic of a community dwelling between four high and separating walls.

The early Church would never have fulfilled its task of Christianizing the Roman Empire unless persecution had scattered the disciples abroad. But with the obvious advantages of this wide dispersion there went a really serious handicap. The Church had no national home and therefore no national responsibility. For the decades in which the New Testament took shape the Christian community could have little interest in national affairs and the fall of Jerusalem only finalized a process which had already proceeded far. In no country were the Christians much better than resident aliens,—the Epistles indicate that in normal times many were constantly on the move from land to land,—and, when the Empire began to persecute, it made them flat outlaws. They were therefore fenced off from politics

and from social relations outside the Christian group. As with Christian converts in India to-day, the hostility of society tended to confine their responsibility to the converted and their children. The fact that a membership is limited to believers amid a hostile environment inevitably dulls the edge of ethical obligation to the masses outside. Because they belonged to no political unit, the first Christian Churches had little to train them in public spirit.

Hence it is that on questions of social righteousness the Old Testament often seems so much more modern in its helpfulness than anything in the New after the Synoptics. There is preaching in the Prophets which for concreteness and power to stab the conscience broad awake has no parallel in the New Testament from John to Revelation. But a great deal of the prophetic teaching suffers by being negative, and for that reason its brave-sounding claims had rarely the driving force to get themselves translated into deeds. The teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics goes down to depths of principle which the Prophets had no line to fathom, and every now and then there is a homely application to remind his hearers of their duty to daily life in the villages and towns of Palestine. Jesus' message of love to men and joyful loyalty to the will of the Father offered the inspiration that the prophets lacked; nor did he cumber the inspiration with elaborate theology.

We may conjecture, indeed, that over and above his ethical sayings which have come down to us, there were others which would have had a chance of preservation, if the early Church had been able to retain its links with a national society. On the other hand we have to admit that the expectation of a Coming End which Jesus entertained, together with an occasional leaning to asceticism, may have prevented him from giving us guidance that sometimes we sorely need.* But when this discount is

* Those who think that all the teaching of Jesus related to the Coming End will of course disagree fundamentally. Their theory dissolves the entire teaching of Jesus into an "ethic for the interval" before the Second Coming (*Interimsethik*). In that case it has less permanent ethical value and my contrast with Paul will not stand. To me it does not seem natural to read the Gospels so. See pp. 112 f., 230.

allowed, it is instructive to contrast the ethical teaching of the Pauline Epistles with the first three Gospels. There is a shifting of the demand upon the disciple. In the Synoptics the ethical note is always dominant. Love to God is rarely mentioned and Jesus regards it as best fulfilled in that love and service of man of which he spoke so often. In the Pauline Epistles, however, love to Jesus, faith in him and the assurance of immortality come a long way first and absorb the keenest interest. The ethical is secondary to the mystical and spiritual. For Jesus communion with the divine always goes hand in hand with service to our fellows; for his thought the two are one. In the Epistles the ethic is for a community. In the greater part of the Gospels the ethic, just because it is for man as man, is also for society as a whole.

There is another way of expressing the same thought. In the preface to *Androcles and the Lion* Bernard Shaw has much to say about the "Salvationism" of orthodox Christianity. For some time I found it difficult to admit that there was any ground for the nickname. But a year or two ago on a country holiday I was shut up for public worship to a Mission Hall of a type with which for a quarter of a century I have had little contact.

From beginning to end the service was self-regarding. The hymns had constant reference to "me," throughout prayers and sermon the lay preacher, a man of unusual ability and persuasiveness, had in mind the judgment from which religion was to save us, and the one aim he set before us was salvation by faith, faith in a transaction, something done once for all. The preacher gave no hint of a moral obligation resting on the soul which accepted salvation or of a relation between salvation and conduct. I came out regretting that I had induced a thoughtful boy to accompany me, for I realized that I had no right to expose any boy or girl to a presentation of Christianity so lacking in ethical demand.

But the village preacher would have told you that his message was nearer to the words of the Bible than mine,

and he would have turned up the Fourth Gospel and the Pauline Epistles.

It would not have been easy to dislodge him. "If you will confess Jesus Christ in word and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. x. 9) is Salvationism in its starkest terms. I Thess. i. 10 is not much better and there are large sections where Paul is wholly preoccupied with deliverance from sin in general or its consequent judgment.

I should be far from saying that Paul wished to preach Salvationism; he was too much interested in ethical religion; but unfortunately some of his most characteristic doctrine did open the way for a religion which concentrated upon personal redemption more than upon the new life of service to God and men. To that extent Paul led away from Jesus. That his emphasis was perilous is shown by the claim of some of his followers that free grace gave them liberty and indeed encouragement to sin (Rom. iii. 8, vi. 1). Paul did not find it simple to clear himself from the hateful inference. It is said that a group of the orthodox of a past generation were discussing the Unitarians of their town, and that when one urged in defence that they lived in splendid loyalty to the moral requirements of Christianity, the retort came quick and pat: "They'd better! They've got no Atonement!" There lies the danger of Salvationism.

(*f*) One of Paul's most serious limitations as the witness to a doctrine of Incarnation is that he says hardly a word about the life of Jesus on earth. Various explanations have been urged to account for this, but they all leave the fact standing there in its gaunt surprise. Paul and his circle believe that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh and yet the Pauline Epistles have nothing to teach, nothing to learn, that comes from the history of the manifestation. The two exceptions are the death (including the last supper) and the resurrection; and in these the whole attention is given to the events as a means of redemption. Jesus came on earth, he died on the cross, he rose again—beyond a phrase or two protesting that he really was man, there is all that Paul finds it necessary to say about the Messiah's

story. The outburst of II Cor. v. 16, "Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, we know him so no more," may possibly have a meaning which is hidden from us, a reference to which we have not the key. But as it stands, it puts into words this characteristic of Paul's writing, and thus understood it will always ring harshly upon the ear. Whether or no that text is intended to summarize and justify the practice, the practice is clear enough. Paul did not refer to the detail of the earthly experience of the Son of God.

His thought was so full of Christ dying and glorified, above all of his spiritual union with the believer, that he had no space to mention Christ's life on earth. The doctrine of the creeds that Jesus had a human nature as real as the divine receives only verbal support from Paul. The human nature seems to be something in which Paul and most of his readers are scarcely interested.* In his writings Paul's belief in Christ is so little related to the earthly form that we cannot use his conviction to overbear the Synoptic indications that Jesus was not divine in the sense of the Creeds.

It is common for the foreign missionary to find that a genuine conversion or perhaps a deep spiritual change in one already a Christian is produced by arguments which to the mind of the missionary are irrelevant, inadequate or even futile. By reason of race and upbringing the mental attitude of the missionary is different from that of the convert. We have a similar sensation as we read the arguments of the early Fathers and indeed of centuries not far removed from us. It would almost certainly have been the same if we could have heard the "proofs" on which the early Church supported its doctrines. Just so the absence of reference to the incidents of the life of Jesus, God made manifest in the flesh, is a reminder that logic in the first century followed another path from that which it treads in the twentieth.

The conclusion, then, to which we come at the end of

* Since for Paul the Incarnation drama "begins and ends in heaven . . . the earthly career of Jesus is a mere episode" (Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, p. 124).

this chapter is that, once we get beyond the Gospels, the New Testament provides no evidence about the life of Jesus which would justify a mind of to-day in overriding the apparent indications of the Gospels themselves that Jesus was human and subject to human frailty.

VII

Summary

In the early Church the fact, and still more the quality, of the worship of Jesus is impressive. If Jesus was only a human teacher, how did men come to worship him as Saviour and God the Son?

To prepare for our inquiry we must remember:

(*a*) the Church's debt to the religion of the Old Testament;

(*b*) that, contrary to frequent assertion, the Jews were not committed to a rigid monotheism. 'The angel of Jehovah,' Wisdom personified, the Logos, different Messianic expectations;

(*c*) that the words 'Messiah' and 'Christ' were available, with the advantage of a varying content, to express the exaltation of Jesus;

(*d*) that to an age which felt God to be far off, Jesus brought Him near;

(*e*) the eager desire for the assurance of immortality.

Against this background Jesus taught of God as holy Father. His belief in his Messiahship elevated his thought and inspired his disciples. When he died, inspiration gave place to despair.

Then something convinced them that he was risen and had not failed. We cannot now discover what underlay this conviction. But it gave them back all they had found in earthly intercourse with Jesus, and more.

In their ecstasy they advanced upon their old belief in God by setting the risen Jesus in the centre of their faith. This advance is the foundation and characteristic of orthodox theology.

The doctrine of Atonement removed the stumbling-block of the Cross.

Paul, coming with fresh energy, cleared away the fences of the Law by flat denial of their validity and so universalized Christianity.

The reality of the Gospel embodied in this construction.

VII

HOW DID THE CHRISTIANS REACH THEIR FAITH?

Each in its own way, the books of the New Testament, Gospels, Epistles and the rest, are the expression of an experience. That experience there is no need for us to describe. It is the central fibre of historic Christianity and it changed the face of the world. Rightly or wrongly the Church embodied it in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, God the Son, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Redeemer from sin and death. In union with him, she taught, the Christian finds his religious being and through every contact with Jesus he touches God Himself. I have heard it said that the Christology of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians did not show any material advance on the Messianic expectations of the Book of Enoch.* That may be true of the Messianic conceptions as they stand, but what is fundamental is their application. The Messiah is no longer the dream of a predicting mind but a figure on the stage of human history who lived in an actual house in Nazareth and did carpentry with workmen's tools for workmen's pay. Enoch might have gone on predicting for ever and little would have happened; but for reasons they thought sufficient men picked out a young Galilean as the Messiah, and, though he had been crucified, after his death they worshipped him as the Son of

* The Book of Enoch is an apocalypse by anonymous authors which R. H. Charles ascribes to different dates between 200 and 64 B.C. For our purposes the most important section is the Similitudes, *c.* 37–71, which contain predictions of the Son of Man, the heavenly Messiah. These are based in part upon Daniel vii. and supply the author of the New Testament Apocalypse with many of the figures to which we are most accustomed from our Bible reading. Nearly all the writers of the New Testament were familiar with it and influenced by it in thought and diction. The early Fathers and apologists valued it as a canonical book.

God. It was a relatively simple and unprovocative thing for the author of Enoch to foretell the coming of a Messiah and to give him a dignity not far from the divine; it was anything but simple and it was intensely provocative to teach that the Messiah had come, and, though the Jewish people as a whole had rejected him, had left disciples empowered to summon the world to worship him and by that faith to obtain salvation. The child Jesus assuredly was set for the fall and rise of many in Israel and beyond it.

The fact of worship was startling, but the quality of the worship was even more startling than the fact. A little knowledge of practical polytheism in its own territory will compel the typical Christian of the Reformed Churches of the West to enlarge and dilute his idea of worship. In a polytheistic country he will learn that worship includes the bargaining with the village goddesses which, like our half-reluctance to go under a ladder, rests on an idea that evil is always lying in wait for us. He must realize that when the Indian engine-tenter garlands the great fly-wheel on the day of *Saraswati-pujah* and prostrates himself before it, that too is worship. The Messianic expectation might have led to something of that quality or to devotion on a rather higher scale corresponding to the Greek cult of "heroes" or the saint-worship of the Roman Church. We actually find, however, (*a*) a high doctrine of the Person of Jesus, so high that we can conceive no higher consistent with the theory of a genuine incarnation, and (*b*) a worship which does not need to restrain itself within the exact limitations of the doctrine and looks up to Jesus at the right hand of glory as to God Himself. While in their definitions the writers of the Epistles put Jesus Christ into a position of subordination to the Father, in their devotion they turn indifferently to either. There are texts where it is next to impossible to decide whether the "Lord" referred to is Jesus raised from the dead or God the Father Almighty. It is hard to do justice to this astonishing fact of theological history. Yet because we are used to the doctrine, we are not as astonished as we should be.

There is beauty in it as well as wonder. The doctrine of

the Incarnation offers a beautiful conception of the message which God would send to His children, and this beauty has done much to ensure its acceptance and to continue its mastery through the centuries. It is no accident that the first Christian documents we possess, the Pauline Epistles, should rise so often into poetry and that this should most naturally happen when Paul's thought is concentrated on the mercy of God and on the redeeming love of Christ. Paul helped to make the doctrine of the early Church, but the doctrine of the early Church made Paul. Of the noblest Christians along the generations from that time to this the same is true.

If, as previous chapters have suggested, the Gospels as now read must be taken as evidence that Jesus was a man like ourselves and not divine in the meaning of the Creeds, a man endowed with a personality of unusual grandeur and with an unexampled capacity for God, but at the end human, we come to the crux of our inquiry :—How did the figure of a unique but human religious teacher become for Peter, Stephen, Paul, and the rest "the Son sitting at the right hand of God" and "the Saviour of the world"? Further, on the human view how are we to account for the unprecedented outpouring of power which was connected with this worship in its beginnings and which, always flowing, has burst out in flood at the special ages of faith? It would be idle to expect that any answer I can attempt will give complete satisfaction to anyone. It does not satisfy me. I can but offer for what it is worth the most convincing explanation that I can suggest at present, in the hope that, where it falls short, it may stimulate others to push their thinking nearer to "the height of this great argument."

One or two preliminary considerations will prepare us.

The Old Testament counted for more than we commonly remember

The Christian Church took the Old Testament as its starting-point. Now that is a tremendous debt which we only fail to recognize because the writers of the New Testa-

ment are too absorbed to acknowledge it. The Old Testament had reached profound depths of spiritual exploration. Round its shaft there are spoil-heaps of inferior matter, and it is easy to think of the result as an ugly mining centre. But we shall be more appreciative when we weigh the precious metals that the miners have brought to the surface. The universal lordship of one God, the growing insistence on His moral purity, Hosea's message of His love, Jeremiah's new covenant, the collection of prophecies about the suffering Servant, the picture of God's infinite forbearance in the last two chapters of Jonah, and the emphasis upon morality intermingled with the proffer of the divine communion, all show that at its best the faith of the Old Testament had collected spiritual treasures far beyond those of any other religion except its daughter faith. A further advance is represented in the Bible by the Book of Job. In that stormy, brave and inconclusive dialogue there is one intuition which penetrates very far into the meaning of any religion which can expect to guide the steps of man in his further evolution: —God wishes men to stand up to Him. It is characteristic of Christianity, but of Judaism in only a slightly less degree, that the highest doctrine of God is wedded to the highest doctrine of man. A short comparison with the other great religions will convince the student that this wedlock is unique. However Barth may intimidate us with his passionate reiteration of the helpless depravity of man, there is one item in the charter of our faith which we shall not readily surrender:—"Thou hast made him but little lower than God" (Ps. viii. 5. R.V.). The same temper may be found in the literature that came between the Testaments. Miss Dougall has set out in *The Lord of Thought* the questionings of those who dared, with lips that trembled in terror at their daring, to appeal to God the Father against the despot previous religion had pictured Him to be.

Then there was the Messianic dream in its various forms. That too was unique in its persistent assumption that God cared enough for His people to intervene for their purification and deliverance. It was also unique in the imperious demand for righteousness which the prophets inside and

outside the canon associated with that thought of God. The Jews had indeed the right to sing Psalm cxlvii. 20, "He hath not dealt so with any nation."

Of all these accumulated riches Jesus and the group of his followers were the inheritors. He used the Scriptures constantly and the reports of his words indicate that he gave notable attention to the Prophets and their predictions of the Messiah. Nervous lest she should seem to surrender a whit of the originality of Jesus, the Church has too often turned a blind eye to this dependence upon earlier spiritual attainment.* But we shall better understand the beginnings of Christianity if we keep before our vision the glorious foundation laid ready for its building. The illumination which we owe to the message and life of Jesus consisted less in the discovery of new truth than theologians have been wont to teach and more in the interweaving and development of the intuitions of those who had gone before and in the assurance of certainty where so far there had only been glimpses and guessing.

The Jews were not committed to a rigid monotheism

It has been a favourite argument for the ordinary doctrine of the divinity of Christ that, if it had not been attested by proof that silenced every challenge of doubt, it could never have arisen among a people so committed to monotheism as were the Jews. The Jews in their captivity in Babylon had learnt once for all that there was one God and from the time of the return were implacable towards every attempt to set any other figure by the side of the One Almighty. If among a people thus committed the belief sprang up that Jesus was raised to sit on the right hand of God and to share the worship men offered Him, the presumption is strong that the first Christians could rest their case on unassailable evidence.

* "Only a close familiarity with both Testaments and some acquaintance with the non-canonical literature of post-exilic Judaism reveal how the piety of Judaism underlies every part of the New Testament."—Dodd, *Authority of Bible*, p. 254. Nisbet.

This argument will not stand examination. It is true enough that in Babylon the Jews had learnt to be monotheists, in that they had come to despise vulgar idolatry and to repudiate the claims of the higher territorial deities worshipped by the more spiritual of their neighbours. They would accept neither the many gods of the polytheist nor the great presiding deities which under a different name for each area claimed for that area to correspond to Jehovah. Yet after such a purification of the corporate thought of a people traces of the old superstitions invariably linger on. The Jews were no exception. We must remember how in Maccabean times the Seleucid Emperors of Syria attempted by every means to make idolatry attractive. They had some success. The polytheism of the Romans no doubt impressed certain of the Jews who reverenced power. Indeed they were surrounded by polytheists, most dangerous when their thinking was least crude.* But whether affected or unaffected by these influences the Jews were not monotheist in the sense that as a nation they were committed to reject every suggestion of different aspects and degrees of Godhead.

The conception of a representative or emanation of God, identified with His nature and yet more or less free to act as a separate personality, arises at several stages in Jewish history. It is found in the "angel of Jehovah," "an occasional manifestation of Yahweh in human form possessing no distinct and permanent personality, but speaking and spoken of at times as Yahweh himself. . . . at times as distinct from him" ('Theophany.' *Encyc. Bib.*, G. B. Gray). In the J sections† the "angel of Jehovah" converses, moves and even eats as a man, but in the E sections there is a tendency to withdraw this intermediary from close human

* How lightly divine honours could be ascribed is shown by the story of Simon Magus, whom small and great magnified as "The Power of God called Great" (Acts viii. 10). This was in Samaria, not forty miles away from Jerusalem, and about as far from the plain of Galilee, and Simon belonged to a circle not unsympathetically pagan but ready to respond to the Gospel message.

† The Pentateuch is based on two early documents, one of the ninth century B.C. which speaks frequently of God as Jahweh (the letters which we know as Jehovah) and is therefore known as J; the other a little later, which calls God Elohim and is known as E. There is the further advantage in these initials that J probably came from Judah and E from Ephraim, the Northern kingdom.

contact. As the centuries pass, the Jews become more reluctant to admit the appearance of God in the guise of man. Yet all the while these passages remained in their Scriptures to help to inculcate in the less philosophic spirits the idea of a revelation of God in human shape.

On the other hand, by an apparent paradox the tendency of the philosophers to remove God to a distance worked in the same direction. The religious mind draws its being from communication with God, and if intellectual fashions bar one line of approach, it inevitably tunnels through by another way. When contemporary theologizing shuts up a man like Cowper to the unhappy belief in a "frowning Providence," the poet consoles himself that behind it "He hides a smiling face." Such phrases as the "glory of Jehovah," the "face of Jehovah" and the "name of Jehovah" were all attempts to get behind the aloof, majestic God to a divine element which comes into revealing, helpful contact with men. That such an element exists is one of the inextinguishable postulates of faith.

The movement went further. The Wisdom literature began to confer divine attributes on "Wisdom" and made her speak in terms natural to the lips of God. She was the aspect of the deity accessible to men. But she was more than an aspect, more even than a personification, for to personify is to treat as personal something below the level of personality. In the case of Wisdom the writers come so near to endowing her with personality that it is impossible to draw the line. The use of the feminine word brought individuality to the surface and, as with the Virgin centuries later, the woman's figure attracted to the cult of Wisdom those who yearned hungrily towards any suggestion of sympathy and tenderness in the divine. Through the most eloquent passages of this literature in the voice of Wisdom sounds a note of solicitous, affectionate appeal. Even the Christian reader, with the invitations of the New Covenant ringing in his ears, cannot fail to be moved by it. To the devout Jews of the Wisdom school moments came when they extolled and trusted her almost as if she were a "person" in the deity.

The minds of such Jews must have been prepared to entertain the thought of a division of persons in the Godhead when they meditated on Proverbs i. 23 f. and 28, where Wisdom speaks:

Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you.
Because I have called, and ye refused;
I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;
They shall seek me diligently, but they shall not find me:

or Proverbs viii., of which the following are the most striking passages:

Unto you, O men, I call;
And my voice is to the sons of men.

I love them that love me;
And those that seek me diligently shall find me.

Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
Or ever the earth was.

When there were no depths, I was brought forth;

When he established the heaven, I was there:

and later, following a summary of creation:

Then I was by him, as a master workman:
And I was daily his delight,
Rejoicing always before him;

And my delight was with the sons of men.
Now therefore, my sons, hearken unto me:
For blessed are they that keep my ways.

The Wisdom of Solomon * develops and extends the same motives. There Wisdom is an effluence from God's glory, the mirror of His power, the image of His goodness. She is His intimate associate, and was with Him when He made the world. She sits ever by His throne and controls all things. It is given her to live with God and the Sovereign Lord of all loved her (viii. 3). Most remarkable is viii. 4, "She chooseth out His works," which seems to mean that in the act of creation she is so powerful as to determine which of the conceptions formed in the mind of God He is to carry out.

With Wisdom so far personalized, it is only a short step forward when about the time of Jesus Philo writes of the Logos, a parallel conception to Wisdom, as "son of God" and "only-begotten." Philo drew his thought in part from Plato and the subsequent development of the idea of the Logos among the Stoics, and for the other part from the "Word" which we can trace as *Mēmrā* in the Rabbinic schools. It is interesting that just before the period when the Christian faith was conceived and born, he should go beyond either Stoics or Rabbis in the use of phrases suggesting a personal embodiment of the principle of creative revelation.

Another group was prepared by the descriptions which marked the further evolution of the figure of the Messiah. In the well-known prophecy of Daniel vii. 13, after the four great beasts the writer describes:

> one like unto a son of man [*i.e.* human in aspect], and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The succeeding verses (18, 22, 27) explain this human form following the brutal governments of the past as "the people

* Probably written in Alexandria in the last half-century B.C. Its most important part is a panegyric on Wisdom.

of the saints of the Most High." Properly, therefore, it is not Messianic at all, nor does it point to a single personality. Yet the semi-divine attributes and powers inevitably create the impression of a semi-divine being existing independently of the supreme God. The impression of divinity is helped by the opening verse which tells how this triumphant figure in human shape came " with the clouds of heaven."

The vision of Enoch xlvi., expanded from the verbal suggestions of the Daniel prophecy, carries the tendency another stage. He sees God and the Messiah together :

> And there I saw One who had a head of days
> And His head was white like wool,
> And with Him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man,
> And his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels.
> And I asked the angel . . . concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was, (and) why he went with the Head of Days? And he answered and said unto me :
> This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,
> With whom dwelleth righteousness,
> And who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden,
>
> Because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him,
> And whose lot hath the pre-eminence before the Lord of Spirits in uprightness for ever.

That this Son of Man was a divine being in the sense that he naturally called out the worship of men the writer makes clear in the next chapter but one :

> " All who dwell on earth shall fall down and worship before him."

Nor must we forget the Jewish tendency to add a saint-like halo to the figures of their greatest religious leaders. To the three who had not actually died, Enoch, Moses and Elijah, they assigned a special place. How Jewish thought was occupied with Elijah is illustrated by the conjecture that Jesus was Elijah returned to earth. At the Transfiguration

the Synoptists tell us that Moses and Elijah came and talked with Jesus. The author of the Hebrews in his references to the mysterious traditions gathering round the name of Melchizedek, shows us one more instance of the impulse of the Jews to create an order of saints midway between God and man.* Indeed for our present purpose it is important to note how fantastic were the conceptions which the author's mind could entertain. According to him (vii. 3) Melchizedek was not only raised above death like Enoch, Moses and Elijah; he had no father, mother nor descent, that is to say, he was not even born! That an able, thoughtful scholar could treat such an idea as beyond discussion or the need for any proof but that of silence, is surely an illustration of the ease with which men of that day would welcome the doctrine of the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God.

All this of course does not mean that the majority of religious Jews were under the sway of these ideas,—the Sadducees and no doubt others would have criticized and opposed them—but it is certain that there were large parties with popular influence whose views could not be limited by strict monotheism as it is ordinarily understood.

In the turmoil of the seventeenth century there is an extraordinary example of a Jewish Messiah who claimed to be divine. Shabbetai Zevi, born at Smyrna in 1626, announced himself as Messiah to a small group in 1648, a year singled out by prophecies. Ten years later as "Son of God" he was married to the Torah (the Law) in a curious ceremony. But soon afterwards a girl who had escaped from one of the pogroms of central Europe made known that she was destined to be the bride of the Messiah. Shabbetai sent for her to Cairo and married her. It does not seem to have stood in his Messianic way that thenceforward his court was given up to sensuous indulgence. All Europe was watching him, Christians as well as Jews; Protestants and Roman Catholics were agog with expectancy, and Rabbis by the score, with many a synagogue, went over to his allegiance. Primo, his

* The Jewish, like the Gentile, world was full of intermediate beings (see pp. 147 f.).

secretary, signed documents in his name "I, the Lord your God, Shabbetai Zevi," and, though it cannot be established that Shabbetai approved this, one of his official proclamations begins "The first begotten Son of God, Shabbetai Zevi, Messiah and Redeemer of the people of Israel." The Sultan imprisoned him, and yet appears to have feared him, for from prison Shabbetai exercised an influence as powerful as at any earlier time. But an informer gave proof of his intended treason against the Sultan, he lost his nerve and turned Moslem. Even then his hold upon his followers seemed only slowly to relax.

The Jewish communities of that time had the experience of centuries of controversy and persecution, all turning on their repudiation of a Messiah from Nazareth. In their Ghettoes the children had been sedulously taught to regard the claims for Jesus as blasphemy against the unity of God. Yet the story of this pathetic pretender shows that it was possible to hypnotize great bodies of Jews into the acceptance of such a claim and to attract multitudes by a crude parody of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. The Jew, it is evident, was not necessarily a monotheist.

The Bahai movement is a useful parallel. If there is a monotheist religion, it is Islam, and yet it was in the Shi'-ite division of Islam that shortly before his martyrdom in 1850 the Bāb proclaimed that he was the expected Imām. Bahā' Ullāh, who usurped the succession, went further and announced himself as the new and transcendent manifestation of God and, especially in Persia, was called "God Almighty." Plainly there is need for caution in any statement as to what doctrines may or may not arise under monotheism of the most dogmatic and watchful type.

The words 'Messiah' and 'Christ' helped the Church to advance to its Christology

One advantage was open to those attempting to explain their conviction that Jesus was in a peculiar relation to God. In the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek translation of the Septuagint the word *Messiah* (anointed) and its Greek

equivalent *Christos* were ready to hand as applied to men. To us the words have acquired so special a meaning with associations of such special reverence that it comes as a shock to realize that the good Hebrew read of Saul, that very human king, as "Jehovah's Messiah," and that the Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion, with the proselytes they gathered, regularly heard the Septuagint translation—"the Lord's Christ." There is particular interest in I Sam. xii. 3, 5, since there Samuel appeals jointly to "Jehovah and his Messiah" as if the anointing of kingship put the king upon a plane distinctly nearer the divine. Chapter xvi. 6 tells how Samuel, apparently attracted by the looks of Eliab, said, "Surely Jehovah's Messiah is before Him." In the Psalms, with one exception, the word refers to the king.* The prophet of Isaiah xlv. 1 calls the pagan Cyrus "Jehovah's Messiah." "Thy Messiahs" of the poem in Habakkuk (iii. 13) may be taken to be the people personified. In all the above passages "Messiah" is translated "Christ" in Greek.

Because the early Christians attempted to explain Jesus to the world as "Messiah," for us reverence surrounds the word with a halo of divinity. It is still more so with the word "Christ," which has passed away from the need for historical explanation and in the title "Jesus Christ" has come to mean "Jesus the Incarnation of God." Our associations are conditioned almost entirely by the subsequent use. But for the Jews and for the intelligent Greek readers of the Septuagint it was the previous use that gave the word its colour. Its application to the risen Jesus involved no break for them, and in pure etymology "Messiah" used of Jesus signified neither more nor less than "Messiah" used of Saul. For us the same mental continuity would have been produced if (as it could have been but for one or two passages) the word "Messiah" had been translated "king" throughout. In any case the examination of the Old Testament usage shows that the position of Messiah

* In Psalm cv. 15 (duplicated in I Chron. xvi. 22) "my Messiahs" seems to refer to the early chiefs of the Hebrew race before the journey into Egypt, though it is possible that it means the people personified, like Hab. iii. 13.

might well be filled by a man and that in the first associations which it suggested to the mind there was none of the mystic divinity that "Christ" at once conveys to a modern hearer. In the circles where the Messianic idea had assumed a character beyond that of humanity, both words would hint at the supernatural overplus, but they did not carry this in themselves, any more than does the word "king," though the Church has been able to connect this word too with Jesus by giving it a mystical value. Later we will discuss the use of Messiah by Jesus himself. For our present purpose the important point is that the disciples found a word ready to their lips, which expressed their sense of the greatness of their dead and risen leader without committing speaker or hearer to the doctrine of divinity.

We have said that it is cause for astonishment that the Christians should put the carpenter of Nazareth into the category of Messiah and offer him worship such as might grow out of the theory of the Messiah in its highest form. That remains true, but it goes some part of the way to explain it that the category was hanging ready like a mystic robe of office for the man whom his disciples deemed fit to wear it. If we may change the metaphor, it is as though we were perplexed to know how a bridge had been made over a ravine and were then to discover a tracing indicating that from the further side there had been facilities for projecting beams half-way across. The tracing would not solve the problem, but it would simplify it. In the same way the fact that certain types of Jewish minds were accustomed to the conception of a being in some eyes human and in other eyes divine does not solve the problem of this chapter, but it does simplify it. Anxious watchers were looking for the consolation of Israel. As they looked, they turned over and over in their minds and wove in and out of one another all these fibres of their national thought. Some Jews, at least, were prepared for a figure sitting at the right hand of God.

To the men of that age God was far off

It is hard for those brought up in a Christian atmosphere to form any estimate of the distance which men of that age placed between themselves and God. Like many other primitive peoples the Hebrews had their stories of the coming of God to earth and of intercourse with men which now and then was almost familiar. At the same time they were always nervous about the effect of a theophany; if God appeared among men, as an earthly king might condescend to walk about among his subjects, so, like the king, if the caprice took him, He might call to His bodyguard round the corner and order them to remove a head or two. In the primitive documents we find the fear that to see God or hear His voice might mean death. The early centuries regarded the theophanies as for the saints, those skilled enough to stand well with the Almighty and reasonably sure of His favour. For the rest, they were always liable to think of Him like the Indian villager who heard an Indian friend of mine to the point when he had grasped that the preacher was really attempting to persuade his audience to worship the one supreme God, and then burst out:—"Worship *Him!* Why, He'd eat us up!"

A similar division of feeling is to be observed in the later centuries. On the one hand the great texts of the Old Testament show that prophets and psalmists enjoyed a sense of the nearness of God and tried to impart it. On the other hand the general tendency of Jewish theology—and that unfortunately was more influential than the warm devotion of personal religion—was to glorify God by insisting that He was beyond mortal ken. We may illustrate this from the editing of the Old Testament to remove phrases which had a flavour of anthropomorphism, from the periphrases for the name of God, and especially from the refusal to allow any to utter the sacred name * outside the precincts of the Temple. Some reflection of this tendency struck terror

* JHVH—which our English Versions read as Jehovah. The taboo had got so far by the time of Jesus, as we know from Philo. Later no one might pronounce the name except the High Priest, and that once a year at the Day of Atonement.

into those simple souls whose natural instinct, in hours of ecstasy or need, would have led them to stretch out their hands and feel Him. The longing for God and the awe of God were both uniquely combined in Judaism.*

The Greek philosophers taught the same doctrine of aloofness, and with more reason, for the gods that came near to men in popular Greek mythology were a notorious hindrance to true religion as to elementary morality.

Though these movements of thought were begotten of reverence, in their turn they all produced fear of God or a despairing sense that He was inaccessible. It was this that tempted men to fabricate the intermediate beings, by means of which they might conceive the influence of the divine trickling interruptedly through to a thirsty world. Wherever the religious tradition was pure enough to set men dreaming of the possibility, there were many who longed with aching desire for a God who was near, for the kind of God who would count it *worth while* to be near to men and women in their want and woe. Other Jewish teachers had taught the nearness of God; Jesus made men joyfully sure of it.

* G. F. Moore (*Judaism*, I. 423–42) will not allow that Judaism inclined to remove God to a distance, but the evidence he quotes seems more significant against his own view than he is ready to allow.

C. H. Dodd's judgment gives the required balance :—"We have seen that a certain tension between the aloofness and the nearness of God is inseparable from religion. . . . It is a post-exilic prophet who has given us the classical expression for that reconciliation of transcendence and immanence which belongs to all complete religious experience :

> 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy :—I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit' (Isa. lvii. 15).

Many of the Psalmists have reached the same level of insight, and there is for them no longer any contradiction between the nearness and the aloofness of God. But it is evident that the tension had not been altogether overcome for the average man. The elaboration of the cultus is itself a symptom. . . . It is the cult of a God who is far away, and its anxious scrupulosity betrays an unsatisfied craving for some more direct sense of God's nearness and accessibility such as a cruder religion had given. The idea of intermediaries between God and man begins to be important. Popular imagination makes great play with 'angels.'" (*Authority of the Bible*, pp. 176 f. Nisbet.)

The doctrine of the Fall, as explaining the depravity of man which some felt so keenly, tended to make men fear contact with God, if they did not actually regard it as impossible. For this see Cave, *Gospel of St. Paul* (pp. 35, 89, 144, 150), with some effective quotations from IV Esdras.

Many at that period sought earnestly for the assurance of immortality

In the Old Testament there are few strains more pathetic than the lament that "they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth" and that those in the gloomy vaults of Sheol "cannot praise thee." To think that this strain sounded on and on through the centuries when Hebrew religion was reaching its highest development and that men appealed despairingly against an extinction which at the same time they accepted as inevitable! By the time of Jesus the Pharisees were teaching a doctrine of resurrection for which only two texts in the Old Testament had prepared the way,—Isaiah xxvi. 19, perhaps to be dated about 330 B.C., and Daniel xii. 2, which probably belongs to 165. The heat of the controversy which raged between them and the Sadducees as late as the trial of Paul show that there was no general assurance of the doctrine. A belief in immortality which is menaced every day by undermining criticism offers but poor consolation.

The Greek and Roman world was in even worse case. The immortality of the soul is cold comfort if there is no God of love to give the naked wandering spirit a welcome to the many mansions, and for the most part those who had enough philosophy to believe in the immortality of the soul had too much to permit them to have faith in a personal God. We know from Cicero and others how they were stricken when they lost one they loved. We can see the like in India and China to-day.

It was this which enhanced the popularity of the "mysteries" of Greece and the Orient. These promised various blessings to those admitted into communion with the particular deity, but the initiates appear to have valued most the promise that they should become as gods, immortal.

The Epistles and the Apocalypse, together with the Fourth Gospel, show how the Christians prized the doctrine. There are passages in Paul where he seems to write in terms so close to the theory of the mysteries that it is hard to believe

that his thought is independent of their influence. It would be only natural if he were so influenced, for the doctrine of the Resurrection must have done much to draw in the Gentile converts, and, as he saw the joy it brought them, he too would dwell upon it and give it large space in his letters. It is significant that in Athens he "preached Jesus and the resurrection."

Now it followed from the certainty which Jesus had of the Father that he took the side of the Pharisees and believed in the resurrection. But because of that certainty he was far more convinced than they, and of course more convincing. Apart from anything connected with his own resurrection, contact with Jesus filled men with an assurance of a Father who would not let his children die. For just that assurance the world was waiting, Jew and Greek alike.

With these thoughts to clear our way, let us attempt, while we remain loyal to our historic conscience, to put ourselves as far as possible in the position of the disciples.

Jesus had fed his mind upon the highest truth the Old Testament had to offer. He talked, as it were, with Moses and Elias, not once but often. His teaching sent others to the same store of treasure. He spoke to men of a God who was personal, holy and loving. To the generations long past and to the simpler among his contemporaries God was personal, but not holy, and for want of holiness His love was capricious.* But a love that is capricious is not truly love and men value it low. Again, the educated classes of his time thought of God as holy, yet so distant as to be barely personal, certainly not personal enough to encourage anyone to say much about His love. But since (if we may for a moment use of ourselves words so great) holiness and love, with the personality which supports them, are the noblest

* It will be obvious that I am using 'holy' and 'holiness' not in the historic sense which Otto in *Das Heilige* has described as the 'numinous,' but with the added modern association of unsullied purity and passionate righteousness. The later evolution of religion has given 'holy' and its kindred words unique suggestions with which I cannot afford to dispense.

attributes of men, they cannot be less real in the character of God. In God, of course, they soar to a point that transcends our imagination, but they must be there, for otherwise God would be lower and more limited than His people at their best. In his teaching that God was Father, the Father as he made men see Him, Jesus combined the finest intuitions of the Old Testament, apprehended at sundry times and in divers manners and degrees. But, as he combined them, Jesus added the vividness that came from his own personal assurance of God. He was sure that God was near him, and the Gospels show that he wished men to be as joyfully convinced that God was near them too. That alone was ample to render his message unique.

Then he believed himself to be the Messiah. Of his Messianic consciousness we shall have to speak later, but there can be no doubt that at some point he became persuaded that he was the anointed of God to lead forth his people into the promised land of faith. We can say this without settling the question whether he expected that this calling would lift him to the level of divinity and of personal worship. That sense of commission communicated itself to the disciples. His goodness reinforced it. His miracles, even if we accept only a proportion of those recorded, would create intense belief and spread it infectiously. For all the hostility that threatened and the premonitions of a baptism of blood, for all his stern demands upon the disciples, it was life abundant to company with Jesus then. The Transfiguration story merely stages in high light a tableau of what their daily life must have been, with its present beauty and its stimulating hope.

But Jesus died. On the night of the arrest and the day of the Crucifixion they were thrown back to the old far-off God of Jewish questioning, of Jewish despair. Jesus had fallen ignominiously and with him sank away the views of God that he had taught. Even the lofty glimpses of the Old Testament on which he had led them to build their confidence faded into the same unreality; they too were delusion. Jesus had made it impossible for the disciples to live without a God who was near, and now God had failed them. When

Jesus was nailed on the cross, God once more seemed worlds away.

What then happened we may conjecture, for we shall never know. Probably the Gospel stories of the Resurrection are conjecture in the main. But when the numbness of the hours following the first disaster had passed over them,—possibly after a much longer interval than the Bible indicates,—to a person or to a group there came the certainty that Jesus had not failed. The person or group was able to communicate it to others. It is likely enough that their new experience connected itself, as cause or effect, with visions of Jesus. The Eastern looks for visions, his religion sets great store by them, and what he looks for he gets.

A woman whose husband was drowned tells how, during the time when helpers were trying artificial respiration upon the body, she had so keen a sense that God was there and that He was love, that she "felt it like a cloud or a presence enveloping and protecting her." She was absolutely sure that God was there. May we not infer that, if she had been one of the company of Jesus in the first century, she would have described her experience as a vision of Christ?

Another friend writes:—"There were two or three occasions during my father's last illness when a similar experience came to me. I remember one morning in particular when, after a night of acute strain, I was walking across the park, going out to the day's routine with my teeth set, but feeling that we had all reached the limit of endurance and that we were up against a blank wall of despair. Then, quite suddenly, there came to me a sense of peace and even of joy which could not possibly be accounted for by outward circumstances and which I have always felt was God breaking directly through to me in the moment of my utmost need. Of course one can only think of them in terms of vision, but it is just such experiences that make it difficult to understand how Christian people can believe that their faith is dependent on a physical resurrection or any sort of physical evidence at all."

It is next to impossible to describe a vision without using words that call up a form already known. When God 'broke through,' to the disciples any vision would almost inevitably be in the form of Jesus. Their training would not incline them to conceive God Himself present in His almightiness. To the form of Jesus their eyes were accustomed; they had been convinced that he was the Messiah and at some point would come again in victory, and their minds were aching with memories of him.*

We have noticed that in Paul's list of the appearances of Jesus he puts the manifestations to the disciples and others in exactly the same class as that to himself on the Damascus road. He does not make the distinction we should make between (*a*) the contact of Jesus as a living person with several disciples who are said to have shared the identical experience, sometimes for a considerable period, a contact like any of our ordinary human intercourse, and (*b*) a fleeting, spiritual vision of Jesus in the mind of a single individual. To use a piece of philosophic jargon, we may say that he makes no distinction between a subjective apprehension of the presence of Christ and his objective presence. The returns of Jesus to his disciples, in the other stories so external and concrete, appeared to Paul to stand on the level of a psychic vision given to himself. Therefore we are justified in doubting whether Paul regarded these other visions as possessing the outward visibility which the Gospel details suggest.

On one point we may expect investigation to open

* The following is taken from G. A. Smith's *Life of Henry Drummond*:—"Men and women . . . brought him alike their mental and their physical troubles. Surest test of a man's love and holiness, they believed in his prayers as a remedy for their diseases, and a sure mediation between their sinful souls and God. It is with a certain hesitation that one asserts so much as this, yet the evidence in his correspondence is indubitable; and as the members of some great Churches are taught to direct their prayers to the famous saints of Christendom, so untaught and naturally, as we shall see, more than one have since his death found themselves praying to Henry Drummond" (p. 11 f.).

"One man said to me only the other day, 'Since Drummond died I have not been able to help praying to him'" (p. 98).

This comparison is interesting because it shows what may happen in our own society. In the case of Jesus the way for this tendency to worship was prepared by the eager expectation of a Messiah.

fuller light. Certain men of scientific training maintain that evidence has accumulated and is destined to accumulate still further for communication between the dead and the living. Most of us regard the evidence to hand as insufficient. But if it were possible for a dead man to communicate with the friends he has left behind, in whose case would this be more likely than in that of Jesus? He was obviously a person of great vitality with power to impress the minds of others, and his miracles of healing show that he could bring to bear upon his fellows forces of which we are only beginning to guess the elementary conditions. Men of a generation or two hence may well find no difficulty in believing that behind the confused stories of the Resurrection told by the Gospels and Acts there do lie instances in which Jesus communicated with his followers after his death. The attack on the genuineness of the Gospel stories of healing has lost its confidence since the examination of mental healing which science has of late been in a position to make, and a parallel change may take place in regard to some of the Resurrection appearances. The difference between this possible new belief and the old is that the new will not allow us to infer that Jesus possessed a nature in essential quality above the human.

But granting that any such communications may conceivably have taken place, how much the first century would have rested upon them! They would readily be expanded into the circumstantial narratives of the Gospels, and in that atmosphere would be buoyant enough to carry the full weight of the theology of the first disciples.

Whatever value there may be in these suggestions, the fact that the Church was born is proof that something happened to bring back the certainty of the divine power, present and available. The disciples said themselves that it was the assurance that Jesus lived,—on that point the Pauline Epistles and the records in Acts are coherent and decisive. In a sense going far beyond the idea of a general resurrection or of that entrance upon a new life which we connect with the death of a Christian, they were sure that he had risen. In spite of apparent defeat he was victorious,

he was indeed Messiah, the Christ. It was Messiahship not in the old material frame that they would have expected, but Messiahship as he had read it and they knew now that his reading was vindicated. To realize that Jesus had been right stimulated their spiritual activity and gave an assured confidence. He had taught that the way of the Servant was the way of the Messiah. That way, they now believed, had brought victory over death. To die for your faith in God was not to die but to conquer. To lose life for God's cause was to save it. Why, that was exactly what Jesus had said! Now, instead of trusting the nearness of God because Jesus was present in the body, they were sure of that presence in spirit and they identified it with the nearness of God. The entrenched conviction of the educated thought of their time was that God could not be known, and so this apprehension of God was a conquest wrung from the enemy after a battle with despair. The grasp of the nearness of God tightened again—that was fundamental—and the fact that they had thus regained it after their cowardice, abandonment and hopelessness, made it not only more vivid and precious, but also more enduring than before.

Again, to remember that he had risen was to answer all the threats of extinction after death. He had taught them to believe in resurrection; now he had himself proved it. As the first-born of many brethren, he had broken down for human kind the gates of death. To use the phrase of Jesus in Luke xx. 36, they became "sons of the resurrection." Their second great religious demand was satisfied.

Having got so far, the next stage was inevitable. The Messianic expectation looked for a transcendent figure to appear on earth from the right hand of God and to act as God's Vicegerent. When the disciples had identified their spiritually triumphant Master with the Messiah, the step to a doctrine of divinity was a short one. As we have seen, the theologians and apocalyptists of Israel had provided the conceptions necessary to describe a divine figure, "Messiah," "Christ," "Lord," and when after the tragedy of the Cross his followers were convinced that Jesus had reappeared in bodily presence, their ecstasy very soon applied them all to

him. The various titles used in Acts * suggest that they did not at once make their definitions of divinity precise, but the essentials for the definition were there. The conviction that the Messiah had come was intoxicating in its power. The mockers were not far out when they said that the Christians were filled with new wine.†

The intellectual obstacles which a group in ecstasy can surmount will stagger anyone who has not watched the workings of a fellowship under some degree of conscious inspiration. I have seen a company of students, from Scotland and theological at that, advocating with an eagerness which was pathetically unable to understand opposition, a perfectly untenable explanation of Scripture in support of an untenable theory of foreign missions. I know enough of their later careers to be sure that as individuals they were sane and cautious. But they felt themselves committed to the theory, and the explanation had come to them unitedly as a revelation resolving difficulties and making loyalty to the theory more possible. It lifted them above themselves and enlarged their capacity for belief. I have myself been member of a group where we were convinced that we saw far into the secret of the coming Kingdom of God. Some way we did see,—enough to be always thankful for the experience,—but I know now that it was not nearly so far as we then thought. We must make full allowance for the ecstasy of the disciples and the second-sight it would produce. During the weeks that followed their assurance of the Resurrection they were "fey."

In a later chapter we shall discuss the common human tendency to seek for a guarantee of God's nearness by attributing divinity to a person felt to be more accessible than God. It is probable that at this creative epoch this tendency was at work. Jesus had convinced the disciples that God was near, and the Resurrection had filled them with the

* See p. 218.

† Further, we should not fail to allow for the belief so generally entertained (and of course fostered by much apocalyptic writing) that this period was what Moffatt has well translated "the closing hours of the world." (I Cor. x. 11.) At the liquidation of the universe great events were only to be expected. (See also Hebr. ix. 26, I Pet. iv. 7.)

same persuasion in renewed power. But when they came to define the persuasion, the old theory of God's distance, which crops up like any weed of which we hope that we have cleared our garden,* made them regard their experience of God, God's immanent presence, as an experience not of Himself, but of Jesus. They entered into communion with a Being on the other side. How they could know that it was Jesus whom they reached and not the Father, is a question we shall later find crucial for ourselves and to which I do not think there is an answer. Their consciousness was full of Jesus, and the fact that all their deepest experiences were associated *with* him, would lead minds with such a history to conclude that they were experiences *of* him. Once that inference was suggested, it would allow little hold to any other. Of this there is abundant proof in Christian history. The temptation to attain the sense of the nearness of God by the short cut of a doctrine of Incarnation is still strong upon us. It would be even stronger then than it is now.

So it was that the disciples of the first days around Pentecost made their advance upon religion as they had conceived it when Jesus was with them. That advance was the foundation of Christian theology, though perhaps in subsequent pages we may see reason to doubt whether it was the foundation of the Christian religion. They still looked to God, much as they would have done in Old Testament days, yet with a gratitude stimulated because in giving them Jesus He had proved Himself indeed Father. But in large portions of their worship God was so much background assumed. They would not have regarded that background as sufficient basis for their new religion. Right in the centre they set the risen Lord. Everything reagent and persuasive in the experience to which they testified they put down to their new belief about Jesus. Thus they accounted for the expansion of their faith by what soon became an expansion of the Godhead. At a very early period they set Jesus the Messiah at the right hand of God and for the most part prepared to visualize that figure as the object of their

* For the degree to which Paul, for instance, reverted to ideas which made God seem hard and distant see pp. 151 ff.

worship. Once they had advanced so far there was nothing illogical in the full Trinitarian development.

But the Cross remained a stumbling-block. Through that terrible gate had been the path to victory, of this there was no doubt; and yet why had it been necessary to tread that path? In minds accustomed to the practice of sacrifice the answer soon took shape—the death was an atonement. For there was still the problem of human sin. The Old Testament made much of it, and Jesus had gone far beyond the Old Testament into its secret sources within the heart. But he had bequeathed no popular, quotable theory of the way the sense of guilt was to be overcome. "God was near," he said, "God was loving." And yet how could that be possible while, as from the time of Cain, sin lay at the door? The death of the Messiah was the explanation. Around that death gathered the most poignant of their memories, the space given it in the Gospels shows how their imagination had dwelt upon its details. Therein they found their solution;—in face of human sin God had Himself provided the Lamb. If there had been some transaction, some concrete "consideration," as the lawyers would say, to discharge sin's debt, it became easier for the ordinary Christian to be sure that God was near, for recurring waves of doubt proved how difficult that doctrine was. God allowed Jesus, as it were, to make reconciliation between Himself and men because he had been the one final sacrifice offered without the camp.

Further, the atonement theory gave an answer to the sub-conscious hesitations as to the worship of a second deity. Only a God could atone for something so stupendous as the sin of men, and yet, according to all their sacrificial training, to God the atonement must be made. There was reason, then, for two persons in the Godhead, one to redeem, one to be the righteous Judge approving the redemption. As the early missionaries began to teach this theory, they found it unexpectedly adapted to meet the needs which the Greek mysteries by their rituals of blood-purchase and identification had illustrated and evoked but been too trivial to satisfy. God loved men because they had been bought with a price.

The richest and most imaginative elaboration of this doctrine we owe to Paul. He knew that he had been freed from the Law by God revealed in Jesus, but a mind like his must try to discover how the freedom had been accomplished. The death of Jesus had bought them from captivity and he could never hope to repay the debt.

This is only one of the services that Paul did for the expansion of Christianity. As we read the history of the Jerusalem Church, scanty as it is, we ask whether it had force sufficient to propagate itself, and therefore to survive. Though some of the inner circle of disciples were apparently members there, it scarcely seems to have been possessed by the plenary inspiration required for its high calling. But when Paul became a Christian, he renewed and intensified those impressions of passion, of eagerness and excitement, of superhuman vigour, which we can trace in the Pentecostal days. In his writings he fixed those impressions for all time. It was like the "relaying" of a wireless message by which the powerful battery of a second station takes up and magnifies manyfold the tenuous waves that it receives from the first. The new faith solved so many of Paul's problems, personal and theological, that the bonds were removed from his immense vitality. Through Jesus, and in Jesus, he had found a God in whom he could exult and all his letters ring with the wonder of it. To realize how much it meant we have only to set his idea of God in contrast with the hard dealings of the Almighty which, before the good news made them free, he and other questioning Jews had felt themselves shut up to accept.*

Besides the gift of his own personality, electric with the passion of the Gospel, Paul did another great service. When Jesus taught men to know the Father, he released them in principle from legalism and the limitation of a national religion. When he insisted that God was Father and that men, men as such, were His children, he cast down all the fences against approach. If the publicans and harlots were children, so were the Gentiles. But passages in the Gospels raise the question whether Jesus had worked out everything

* See *The Lord of Thought*, Dougall and Emmet.

that the principle involved. At least it is evident that he did not make his teaching sufficiently decisive on the negative side to deliver his Galilean disciples from some of their characteristic prejudices. Occasionally when fences have been thrown down, men find it so awkward to cross them without stumbling that they continue to follow the old track. If they are to have free access to the open country, it is not enough to throw down the fences; you must remove them. So it is with the fences of the mind. It is generally a good rule to concentrate on positive statement. Yet there are positive truths which will never secure obedience until we state in uncompromising terms the negation they imply. It was the second of Paul's contributions that he stated the negative with an emphasis that no one could mistake. There was a danger that the Jerusalem Church might develop a religion in which the Law should still play a regulative part and Jesus be regarded as a Rabbi of a reformist temper, but still a minister of the circumcision. Paul insisted that circumcision was done with, that the Law was not the way of salvation—and that eternal life was not confined to the Jews. He brought in the Gentiles and set them down at the feast; from then onwards the Jewish Christians could only refuse to share with the Gentiles at the price of excluding themselves. The revolution was as essential as it was courageous, for without it Christianity would have been snuffed out in a few generations. It was possible because, however emphatic Paul might be in his negations, he felt and expressed the positive content of the Gospel with such convincing eagerness.

For it *was* a Gospel. The previous pages may have made us doubtful of its theology, and even persuaded us that the story as told by the first three evangelists contains evidence incompatible with the doctrine of the Person of Christ in which the early Church attempted to convey this great new experience. We may feel that the theology of the Church was an involuntary construction to which many brought their contribution, sometimes of truth and sometimes of the misconception natural to the thought of the time. But in it all there was the message of Jesus to men in need, that

God was everything that the seers of the Old Testament had grasped in the hours of their highest inspiration, that beyond this He was Father seeking the love of all His children and the return of those who had wandered away, that He forgave sin, that faith guaranteed the power to live the life of communion and righteousness, that obedience mattered and ritual did not, that love to the Father must prove itself in love to His other children, that men of every race might come in, that life in God here guaranteed life in God hereafter. When he had departed from them, his followers made one important addition. By their worship they proclaimed everywhere that in his life and teaching they came to understand the nature of the divine. Modern preachers express the same thing in a modern way when they say that "God is like Jesus." Even if we consider that Jesus was liable to mistake, the essence of that statement still remains one of the central certainties of the Christian Gospel.

If we think of any other religion then or now, we shall have no doubt that this was good tidings, good enough indeed to explain the immense change that Christianity has made in history. From the Greeks and other Gentiles of the centuries before Jesus many were drawn in by the Old Testament alone, with its crudities and its questions unanswered or answered wrong. In it, meagre as it was in comparison, they found a magnet constraining them to be proselytes. By that measure we can form some slight idea of the deliverance and joy which the completer message of Jesus brought to the world.

We may be content to believe that the message could not have been conveyed to the thought of that day except by the theological construction in which the Church of that day so naturally enshrined it.

VIII

Summary

"But," many will insist, "whatever criticism infers from the Gospels, there are other overweighting proofs of the reality of orthodox Christianity." What are they?

The Bible, so far from guaranteeing the orthodox view, is one main cause of our difficulty. Many traces in the Old Testament of ideas less than Christian, inseparable from a long religious evolution, and continuing into the New Testament also. Salvation cannot rest on the acceptance of a written document.

The Church, human and fallible, has stood sponsor for unworthy ideas of God, has opposed scientific advance, has often neglected the weightier matters of the law and has tolerated unchristian conduct at the heart of her organization. The Church has no existence apart from her fallible members, and the wonder is in the notable good she has accomplished.

The experience of Christians, when regarded historically, is largely a repetition of the argument from the Church. If, however, we rest our case upon individual experience, this can give no assurance that in our feeling of a divine presence we have knowledge of the presence of the Living Christ as distinct from the presence of God.

The outburst of power at the beginning and in the ages of faith. Other religions have seen outbursts of power. Even if stress is laid on the quality of the influence, this does not prove that there was no alloy of illusion in the cause.

None of the supposed supports of the old doctrine can guarantee it against the results of criticism.

VIII

THE BUTTRESSES OF ORTHODOX DOCTRINE

During several of the last pages many a reader has been longing to interpose with the protest: "The documents you have been examining do not contain the only proof, or perhaps even the main proof, of orthodox Christianity. They have supports in certain respects greater than themselves. With the strength of those supports your reading of the documents fails to reckon. You must make more allowance for God's power and interpret the documents with that in mind. When you conclude that the life of Jesus was human and not divine, you contradict other evidences of the reality and cogency of Christianity as it has always been understood. There must be some fallacy in your reasoning."

The challenge of course is a fair one.

The supports to which the appeal is made are (1) the Bible, (2) the Church, (3) the Christian consciousness or experience and (4) the outburst of spiritual energy not only in the early days of Christianity but also in later centuries.

As a background for the first two we must remember that throughout the nineteen centuries the presuppositions of theology have been incessantly modified. Rules which once seemed absolute have lost authority, and men to-day are sensitive about ideas and practices which formerly were tolerated and even universally approved. This means that no amount of sympathy for our ancestors in the problems with which they wrestled, or of historic understanding of the reasons which led them to address them as they did, will save us from admitting that they were often wrong. Moral standards are evolving all the time, and while this demands that we should be slow to blame the actors of a past century,

it demands no less that we should be dissatisfied with many of the principles on which they acted. Unfortunately the official guardians of religion, backed up by a majority of the members of the Church who dislike the mental effort involved in change, have at every stage attempted to retain standards which to the more reflective and radical minds appeared hopelessly out of date. We should not forget the warning of Chapter II against the danger of allowing a convention to continue after its originating life has ebbed away. The fact of a perpetually evolving ideal must make us cautious in the choice of the infallibilities on which we rest. Perpetual advance means also perpetual leaving behind.

After the freedom with which the books of the Bible have been handled in the previous pages, it is needless to discuss whether orthodoxy can hope to gain much from suggestions of infallibility in the Bible. It is in the Bible that our perplexity is born. But there is need for resolute and courageous thought about its modern use if we are not to lose the unique guidance it has to give.

Most of us have ceased to discuss the question of verbal inspiration, but we are still in a period of transition. The affections and reverences of our early teaching continue to hold us long after we have abandoned the interpretations which begot them. While the reading of the Bible is still an important part of public worship, even among the Free Churches it would be rare to find a reader who interrupted the reading enough to warn his hearers that some of the verses must not be regarded as expressing the Christian standards of to-day. Yet I doubt whether it is safe to read in public more than, say, half the chapters without some such warning and perhaps the repudiation of certain typical ideas. There still lingers an almost universal tendency to treat the Bible sentences, whether for attack or for obedience, as the formal articles of Christianity. Those of us brought up as Christians have read them under the sway of presuppositions which have made us incapable of judging the effect they have on modern ears.

I will say nothing of the need for a measure of archæological knowledge to understand the Bible or of the perplexities produced by its arguments, sometimes in themselves involved, often obscured by theories and tempers which have long since passed away. All this would be comparatively unimportant if the moral teaching of the Bible were free from occasions of stumbling. If that were so, we might let readers browse without protection. Happily there is, as has been suggested already, an automatic and instinctive higher criticism which seeks out the passages that feed the soul. The reading of the Old Testament, for example, does less harm than one might expect. The Christian mind spiritualizes passages which in their literal meaning are unchristian and concentrates on the paragraphs which it finds beautiful and inspiring. But everyone has not this power of selection. The less Christian passages are there and, because they are in the Bible, they command a certain veneration. In some cases that veneration, as in the sad quotations justifying hatred during the War, leads individuals and Churches astray at moments of crisis, and it takes years to repair the damage done. In other cases the veneration acts as an irritant, and sensitive spirits are driven away from religion, because they link the Church, and, alas, God, with teaching which their conscience rejects.

There is more of this than we generally remember, for we all tend to confine ourselves to the sections we like. The story of God's command to sacrifice Isaac, or Samuel's rebuke to Saul in the name of the Lord for not killing captives, may be matched with the horrible destruction of the firstborn of ignorant, guiltless, Egyptian peasants. The books themselves tell the stories with approval, and no expurgation will eliminate the feeling and moral cadence of the narratives. Or there are passages such as chapters xxv, xxvi 1–6 and xxviii 20–24 of that good man Ezekiel where, after threatening neighbour nations with savage penalties out of all proportion to their trivial offences, he ends with the refrain, "And they shall know that I am Jehovah." No wonder the surrounding tribes would have nothing to say to Jehovah and took it out of his worshippers when they

got their chance! I need not discuss the imprecatory Psalms, but in many not generally so classed, which the revisers of the Prayer Book have not marked for optional omission, there are cries to God for vengeance, and not a sign of question whether the suppliant himself might be in part to blame. From beginning to end "the righteous" takes himself at his face value, and in comparison with the rest is quite sure that he deserves God's favour. The theory that God will reward goodness with wealth, children and long life, is nearly as influential in the Psalms as in Proverbs. Further, while there are scores of passages in which the Old Testament writers refer to other nations with contempt and hatred, the ten fingers would be enough to count those that breathe international generosity.

The fact is that by its inherent quality the history of a religious evolution, which is what we possess in the Old Testament, must be as full of warnings as of instruction or examples for imitation. To estimate it arithmetically, the larger number of its verses must be imperfect and, if treated as valid for a later epoch, immoral. Just as nature destroys the majority of the organisms which serve the ends of some line of natural selection, so a more adult morality repudiates as childish and immature nearly all the moral expressions which preceded it. Accordingly it is disastrous to read the various books of the Bible with the feeling that the divine approval rests indiscriminately on the acts of the old heroes. What is truly inspired in the Old Testament is the unique upward movement of Hebrew religion towards the Father. And in order to show that the last stages are high, it is essential to acknowledge that the primitive stages are low. The acknowledgment must be on a large scale, and so far the Church shrinks from this.

The same principle applies to the New Testament, with the difference that while the Old Testament gives us the record of centuries and so allows us to compare earlier development with later, the period represented by the New is short. To 'isolate,' therefore, the primitive crudities in the New Testament we have to compare it with the evolution of the Christian consciousness in later generations.

This involves the public repudiation of verses like those referring to the lake of fire or the sin against the Holy Ghost.

There could be no greater mistake than to regard this protest as academic or to postpone the repudiation to some more convenient season. The passages which we should repudiate are all the time poisoning thought. In one of our universities recently the leaders of a sectional Christian organization presented to its members a recommendation to stand aloof from another body which they considered unsound in the faith. In this they may or may not have been right, but for our purposes what is significant is that they referred in writing to II John 10:

> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not admit him to the house—do not even greet him, for he who greets him shares in his wicked works.*

If we believe that truth is rarely all on one side and that anything we have to give to our opponents is given best in friendly contact, can we doubt that such a text must be disavowed? That is a small instance. But I am sure that the failure to distinguish between the moral values of various parts of the Bible has a considerable responsibility for the popular misconception of Christianity which is so common to-day. During and after the war leaders of the Church examined the religious life of the nation in the light thrown upon it by war conditions and published their results in 1919 in *The Army and Religion*. The report bears explicit witness to this misunderstanding. The ten years since publication have confirmed the report by the falling statistics of Church attendance. With many of those who run down Christianity the misunderstanding is wilful, but we have no right to rely on that explanation, as long as the Church is failing to remove so obvious a cause of error. Nor must we forget that half-trained Christians, in proportion as they regard the wording of the Bible with more verbal respect, suffer more from its mistakes. The Bible has an essential

* See p. 143.

part to play in the religion of to-day, but it can only play it if we teach men to identify and reject its dross as fearlessly as they choose its gold.

Incidentally it is worth while to protest against the idea that our salvation can rest on our acceptance of the revelation contained in a written document. If a document is to be the vehicle of salvation for all successive generations, it must be absolutely inerrant. Yet no written document can be free from error. The Moslem, who takes his theory of verbal inspiration with seriousness, insists against Christianity that no translation can be inspired. From the verbal point of view he is right. A translation does involve a measure of interpretation, sometimes of real importance for doctrine. Our theology is affected, for instance, by the way we translate *αἰώνιος* in the phrase we know as "eternal life." No record like the Gospels can convey the look or gesture with which a sentence was said, though these may be vital for its meaning, still less can it convey to us the mind of the speaker, —subject to a thousand permanent and fleeting influences. Further, a document which defines the way of salvation once for all can allow of no evolutionary development in its own framework or in the meaning and associations of the words.

The foundations of a faith based on Biblical documents become precarious indeed when in commentaries which pass as conservative we find that every tenth clause of a Synoptic Gospel is attributed to "the editor." Nor are we better off with the doctrines as they are expressed in the Epistles and elsewhere. The history of theology or of denominational controversy shows how differently these may be understood. But even if it were possible to secure one standard explanation of the various disputed passages, we should still be faced with the baffling complication of the dogmas which are founded upon them. A text-book of dogmatic theology, all the more when it is written with consummate skill and lucidity, leaves the reader with the impression that a way of salvation which must be hedged about with so much theological dexterity can hardly be a continuation of that teaching of Jesus which the common

people heard gladly. It will not do to say that the dexterities are for the theologians alone, and that the rest have only to accept the Creeds in their simplicity. For we are constantly told, and justly, that our congregations need more theology.

A belief in the Creeds is bound to be an exercise in philosophy. The moment a worshipper asks why there is a Son and a Spirit as well as a Father, he starts philosophical questions of the subtlest kind. The Churches without creeds, like my own, cannot say that their withers are unwrung; for our present argument the general acceptance of credal ideas is hardly distinguishable from a written creed, while many of the best known hymns raise tremendous problems of thought. And clever children of six and seven begin to puzzle over them.

Very much of this difficulty arises from the assumption that the creed of the Church can be founded upon the authority of a book. To make that possible the book must be infallible. And for the books of the Bible we can no longer press that claim. Our fellowship with God cannot stand or fall with our belief in doctrines guaranteed by its pages.

Next there are those who assert that the critical result of our earlier analysis is proved to be misleading by the testimony of the Church. They remind us with truth that the Church existed before the Gospels or any part of the New Testament and indeed that it created them. They urge that, whatever the critics make or unmake of the Gospels, the continuing witness of the Church from the beginning is a sufficient basis for the orthodox conviction of Christians about Jesus.

The Church, as the Bible, is an important contributory authority. To many of us these words will sound cold. They fall far short of the love and gratitude of those who, like myself, have been suckled at the Church's breast and have learnt to pray at her knee. To the Church we owe the atmosphere we breathe and the teaching which feeds our Christian life. We are proud to be in her service now.

But with all this gratitude there is no inconsistency if we still regard her as a human, fallible institution, flawed by 'the strain of the stuff' and marred with earthly soil. We do her no dishonour when we refuse to take her as the mistress and guarantor of our communion with God. Like the earthly mothers whom we reverence, she has not the spiritual perfection which would qualify her to defend what seems indefensible in the Gospels against the criticism of a more sensitive Christian conscience. If the tradition on which she relies is continuous through the ages, so is the story of her imperfection.

There are those who plead the Christian case in words such as these :—"It may be that parts of the story of the Gospels suggest that Jesus was human. In spite of that, by right of her unbroken spiritual experience, the Church guarantees that he was also God." These compel us—for all our love—to ask what qualification the Church has to give the guarantee.

Her record as a prover of spirits is a poor one. She has guaranteed too much at every epoch and with a blind acceptance. Without compunction she has stood sponsor for unchristian representations of the character of God. Only of comparatively recent years has she felt it needful to apply the mind of Jesus to the Bible. It is pathetic that the Church should have taken eighteen centuries to become uneasy about the lake of fire and that at the end of nineteen she still reads phrases of hatred in the Psalms and teaches that the Son of God could call some among his brethren "generation of vipers!" She has compromised herself by a misleading dependence on supernaturalism and has been content to believe that, if an act or saying were supernaturally conditioned, it could not be morally wrong.

We are led to feel that there are ideas and suggestions in the New Testament which misrepresent God. If so, let us not forget that the argument of the Church's priority is double-edged. For the misrepresentation came through, and indeed from, the Church. The Gospels and Epistles are the reproduction of the Church's thought and their mistakes originated in the Church itself. It is therefore

hard to see how we can bring in the Church as a final support for doctrines which we can no longer rest on the authority of the Bible. The mistakes which invalidate the Bible as an authority, invalidate the Church at the same time.*

Nervous of any threat to her dogmas, the Church has as unfortunate a record in her handling of the new truths of science or history. The fact is notorious and to emphasize its bearing one need only quote the following quiet sentences of A. N. Whitehead :

> For over two centuries religion has been on the defensive, and on a weak defensive. The period has been one of unprecedented intellectual progress. In this way a series of novel situations have been produced for thought. Each such occasion has found the religious thinkers unprepared. Something, which has been proclaimed to be vital, has finally, after struggle, distress, and anathema, been modified and otherwise interpreted. The next generation of religious apologists then congratulates the religious world on the deeper insight which has been gained. The result of the continued repetition of this undignified retreat, during many generations, has at last almost entirely destroyed the intellectual authority of religious thinkers. (*Science and the Modern World*, p. 233. Cambridge Press.)

But these reasons for distrusting the claim that the Church can authenticate a doctrine against all criticism are as nothing to her history in the moral realm. That too is notorious and so bitter to the taste that only the necessity of completing the argument justifies us in dwelling upon it even for a little.

It has been beyond her power to overcome completely the weaknesses of human nature, but that is no blame to her. Her blame lies in failing so often to challenge those weaknesses and in giving them a lodgment in her bosom. From the Corinthian Epistles of the first century to the

* Those who accept the contention of *The Lord of Thought* (see pp. 124 f.) must obviously cease to lay stress upon the corroborating authority of the Church, for in their view the Church completely misunderstood the temper of Jesus.

present day there is a chain of evidence telling in detail of her neglect to stand up against evil in her own members. She has been afraid of the resultant commotion and the pain. She has not dared to lose her life in order to save it. She has turned aside from injustice on the muttered plea that it was better that one man should die than that the interests of the Church of Christ should suffer. There are few reforms which found their first welcome in the organized Church. This statement, though true in principle, may need some qualification in regard to the ages when the Church was the home of all intellectual activity, and "Christian" was the official description of those who pioneered the cause of emancipation from tyranny and paganism. But in almost every case these were a minority and the opposition to be dreaded was within the ranks of the hierarchic Church. For the most part the fault does not lie with the fact of hierarchy; democratic assemblies have been as prejudiced against attempts to rouse the public conscience.

If the Church in England had been alive, England would not have touched the traffic in negroes to the American settlements, still less claimed it as her monopoly. It took the reformed Churches two hundred years to begin in any serious way to preach the Gospel to the non-Christian world, and many a leader in ecclesiastical assemblies before and since has told the pleading Careys to sit down. The story of the wars of religion is one of the "old unhappy far-off things," but its essential spirit has lived on in England as the education controversy and retarded the mental growth of the children.

It is admittedly easier to excite the Church about her privileges and dignities than about righteousness in matters not directly affecting herself. Yet these are "the weightier matters of the Law." She has been more concerned to resist divorce and marriage with a deceased wife's sister than to demand houses in which grown brothers and sisters or fathers and grown daughters should be able to sleep in separate rooms. You can generally rouse a Free Church Council against Sunday games, but there has been no organized movement in the Free Churches to provide playing fields

for the children of our close-drawn streets. Again, the Churches have done little corporately to deal with unemployment or to call attention to it, although the moral are even worse than the physical and economic consequences. Most of the trouble comes from a lack of imagination; yet in the parable of the sheep and the goats it was precisely the lack of imagination that Jesus condemned.

But the Church has done worse than acquiesce in evil without protest; she has accepted and used the weapons of evil in place of the armoury of the Spirit. Every man with a smattering of Church history has his impression of the methods habitual in and around the Ecumenical Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries which formulated our creeds. He can recall the stories of persecution in almost all the Churches,—how often the Churches have hated heresy more than sin! He thinks of the intrigues which have gathered round ecclesiastical appointments or the alliance of Christian bodies with the secular power and with rank and wealth. He sees the regimental banners in our cathedrals embroidered with the names of victories which were also massacres, and he finds a crowded meeting of the Churches to support the League of Nations taking the speeches against war with serious enthusiasm and then standing up to sing "Send him victorious." He remembers the wicked men who have been in authority at many times in the Church's history, not because her members did not know, but because for peace or for advantage they thought it best to acquiesce.

The Fourth Gospel gives us a great positive principle, "Whoever wills to do His will, shall know whether the teaching is of God." The converse is just as true. He who does not will to do God's will cannot know the fullness of His teaching. The Church which has so often failed to do God's will cannot claim to know infallibly what teaching is and what is not of God. Is there any case left for invoking the Church as a final authority, to which criticism and private judgment must alike defer?

If we can escape from that aberration and look the facts sanely in the face, we shall see that all this failure of the

Church is natural enough. The controversy arises largely because we personify the Church. I have done it in these pages for convenience in expression, and also because I believe that there is such a thing as group consciousness, something that we may call the soul of an organized society. But that group consciousness or soul can never exist apart from the individuals who make up the group. It is impossible to sever it, so to speak, from the nerve threads of its component personalities. In very much of our talk about the Church we forget this. The whole 'Catholic' conception of the Church is based on the theory of a self-subsistent group consciousness independent of the frailty of priests or laymen. There is no such independence. The spirit of the Church may be in the heavenly places, but its feet are in the street,—sometimes a miry street. The Church, therefore, is inseparable from its members; it is responsible for its unitary cells as well as its complicated organisms.

Once that is understood we can look back over history with thankfulness to God and mark the progress of the years. The Church has been His instrument in moulding to His will a stuff which but for such an instrument would have been intractable. The individual members of the Church have risen by slow evolution. In the same way at the cost of the suffering of God and the heroism of men the soul of the Church is slowly evolving towards His high calling and gradually sloughing off the uncleanness of its human composition. The evil is seen only as an imperfect comprehension of the demands of ideal right, an interruption on the ascent to the divine goal, an obstacle upon which the powers of men and Church could be trained. Even as it is, the Church has done a marvellous work for the world in the nineteen centuries since Jesus died. What in the future God's grace may use her to accomplish, eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man.

But we must not ask her to authenticate her foundations. She cannot raise her head so high as that. Her moral credit is not essentially different from theirs. She has constantly to seek forgiveness. An Incarnation of God would be an absolute fact; the Church by reason of her weakness is

relative, and a relative cannot authenticate an absolute. She can assure us of her conviction that Jesus was God incarnate, but, much as we respect it, we cannot treat her bare asseveration as decisive, if we are not satisfied with the grounds on which it is based.

The third authority for the orthodox theory of the divinity of Jesus is the experience of Christians in the earliest beginnings and up till now. Where men have come to the conclusion that they can no longer trust to an infallible Bible or an infallible Church, they turn to this reinforcement with eagerness. The argument is at present a popular one.*

In so far as it deals with believers of centuries gone by, it is in large degree a repetition of the argument from the Church with a slightly altered emphasis. For after all the Church is—or ought to be—just the body of men and women inheriting and possessing a Christian experience and bound together by it. No one who enjoys the reality of the Christian experience will doubt that past ages have had the same experience, and that those with a special genius for religion have had it in a form more exalted than the rest. Yet theology depends upon the interpretation of experience, and our problem is one of interpretation. We have seen that we cannot trust the corporate Church. Surely individual Christians were even less qualified than the Church corporate to override the interpretation of another group of individuals. For the most part they absorbed their interpretations ready made, and the few who thought for themselves were superior to the corporate Church neither in intellect nor character. Indeed to the

* For instance, Vincent Taylor (*Hibbert Journal*, July 1927, p. 743). Decision upon the degree of historicity underlying the Fourth Gospel "must be influenced by . . . the degree to which we share or do not share that experience of the living Christ, so real to the Evangelist."

Again: "The real value of Dr. Warschauer's sincere and able work is, that it enables us to realize what has been too long obscured, that the faith of the Church was not built upon the four Gospels, but upon the experience of the risen, ever-living and ever-present Christ." (R. F. Horton in a review of *The Historical Life of Christ*, J. Warschauer, *Christian World*, February 3, 1927.)

misjudgments of the Church they often added private and personal vagaries.

But the argument is a new one when an individual of to-day is conscious of the experience and is convinced that it is communion with Jesus. It is no longer a matter of history but something immediately apprehended. Yet here too we are really dealing with an interpretation. Chapter VII has reminded us how inevitable it was for the disciples to describe any vision after the death of Jesus as a vision of him. Their waking thought was filled with him. If there came to them an unusual certainty of the nearness and guidance of God, a sudden and divine release from sorrow, an assurance of forgiveness, an overflowing joy, everything would tend to make them attribute it to the Messiah sitting at the right hand of God.

We have not the same vivid memories of physical companionship with Jesus, but in our case nineteen centuries have created a mass suggestion from which it is almost impossible to clear the mind. The Pauline Epistles reiterate the idea of direct communion with Jesus glorified, the teaching of the Church in its simplest and warmest expression urges the hearer to seek relations with him as Saviour and Friend Unseen, while our hymns have perhaps a stronger influence still. A man must be independent indeed if he is not to allow his interpretation to be shaped by the mould which the tradition of the Church has prepared with such loyal affection.

Yet we are bound to ask whether, apart from the mass suggestion which the Church has so sedulously diffused, we should have in our experiences of deity anything which we could with confidence identify as the presence of *Christ*. In no communion, whether of the continuous, almost subconscious hours or of the rare moments when the soul is flooded with light well-nigh insupportable, is a visible form conveyed to our souls from outside. So far as our communion seems to be clothed with a visible garment, we supply it by the artistry of our own mind. And naturally our mind, following the line of the suggestion the Church has instilled, fills in the form of Christ. If our minds

demand a form like those we see, his is the only form they can choose; for we can be content to link no visual form with our thought of God, or even of the Spirit.

But all the time our experience is something that we feel, together with an assurance that the feeling involves a contact with some existence other than our own mental state. Is it possible to be sure that we identify Christ as that existence? In the communication is there any difference between what we call an experience of Christ and an experience of God? On the day when I was converted I had an experience of a divine presence, and I should have said that Christ had met me then. Yet as I think myself back into it now, I can detect in my consciousness no marks of the identity of Christ. Later as an undergraduate I passed through another crisis in which I had to fight what seemed a losing battle with the temptations of sex. I got a glimpse of a far-off victory only when I felt that even if it came to the worst, even if all the rest of me were morally disabled, I should still be able to turn my eyes to Christ and know that he would accept my will to righteousness and forgive my sin. (I need not pause to explain or justify the paradox; it has empowered many to tread evil beneath their feet and the Church has described it in several ways.) This experience too was unmistakably real. But I now believe that the *picture* of Jesus risen which gave form to everything that mattered to me then, was the creation of the Church's tradition working upon my own mind. Any other form in which I could have represented to myself the forgiving love of God would have helped me to "personalize" the experience that saved me from going down. There are records of visions of Buddha to Buddhist worshippers, and, with all reverence be it said, if I had been brought up in that branch of Buddhism which teaches men to worship him, I should probably have represented my divine helper under the guise of Buddha.*

* To say that the Buddhist would personalize a special experience of God in the form of Buddha, while the Christian does it in the form of Christ, is not to say that the two experiences have equal value. The Buddhist teaching about God—or in its strict doctrine its denial of Him—must needs produce a different experience of the divine from that of those who have learnt to think of God as the Father in whom Jesus trusted.

Unless others therefore can convince us of the presence of Jesus with men here and now *as distinct from the presence of God*, the "evidence of the Christian consciousness" is insufficient. We may not base on that imagined distinction the assurance that Jesus was God the Son.

The fourth argument for accepting the orthodox doctrine lies in the outburst of power to which the new belief gave rise. There was indeed an outburst of power; its influence is felt throughout the world to the present day. The early Christian movement that fought its way through the centres of the Roman world and brought the Empire to its knees, had an importance no historian can ignore. In the Gospel as the first converts preached and lived it there was energy to transform great masses of society and a truth which satisfied the hunger and thirst of men. By doing so it set their spirits free. We may not infer, however, that their presentation of the Gospel was true in all respects. Enough if it contained large elements of truth not yet grasped and of inspiration not till then available.

For the argument from an outburst of power may easily prove too much. In the time of Josiah, the reformation connected with the noble teaching of Deuteronomy proclaimed a new and noble message which wrought with the abnormal potency of some liberated chemical. But that does not justify us in approving all the religious teaching Deuteronomy provided. John the Baptist stirred the people by his preaching, stirred them, as has been suggested, more permanently than our records show. Yet we should not regard that as a proof that we must implicitly accept his idea of God, in spite of all other reasons for distrusting it. The judgment attributed to Jesus, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he," was a warning against taking all John's message as inspired. The Franciscan movement swept over Europe with unexampled speed and called out loyalties and heroisms parallel to those of the first Christian centuries. It is obvious, however, that Francis sometimes went astray.

Nor must we forget the religious movements altogether outside Christianity. The origins of Buddhism are obscure, but the evidence points to rapid conquest throughout the Indian continent, while the story of the spread of Buddhism to the other immense populations of Asia is as wonderful as that of the spread of Christianity itself. The expansion of Islam is not less remarkable in its rapidity and in its release of spiritual energy coupled with fanaticism. The fact that we do not approve the fanaticism gives us no right to ignore the energy. Yet we do not say that Buddhism and Islam are true systems as they stand, only that they conveyed truths which met certain religious needs. In recent times we have the triumph of the Bahai revelation near the Persian Gulf and even in the United States. Christian Science has spread widely and is spreading still, but we seek for the explanation of its helpfulness elsewhere than in its doctrine that disease is "error." That a revelation is marked by an outburst of power is a strong presumption that it contains truth, not that we can put faith in all its doctrines, even those which its leaders regard as fundamental.

But the argument from an outburst of spiritual power may take a somewhat different form. We may lay the emphasis more upon "spiritual" than upon "power" and ask whether results of the quality produced by Christianity in its past history and in the world to-day can be due to a delusion. If Jesus was not God incarnate, how can we account for the changes in millions of individuals and in whole societies which followed upon the acceptance of a message in which that doctrine was cardinal? Is it not a reflection upon the moral order that a false belief should produce on an immense scale characters and conduct of the highest quality?

The answer is that truth and falsehood are of necessity relative and that, as long as we are in a world like this, we can only regard "truth" as the stage reached in a process of the advancing investigation of reality. At any stage therefore the pure metal will be mingled with some alloy. Indeed, as gold alloyed is more useful for particular purposes, so reality with an admixture of myth may better penetrate

the undeveloped mind. But just as the alloy is, so to speak, the vehicle which carries the gold, so the myth is merely the vehicle by which the reality can reach the understanding. The reality is the dominant and operative element and the myth exists for its sake and for its sake alone. Such benefit as the myth conveys is due to its approximation to the ideal reality. In other words, during His training of the human race God has made use of conceptions of which part looked forward to ultimate reality and part still retained their connection with the crude beliefs from which thought was painfully emerging. If God is to communicate His revelation through human minds, it is hard to see what other course is possible. In an article by H. W. R. this passage occurs:

> There is a beneficent ministry of illusion. God does not wait till men have acquired perfect knowledge; He leads them on by their partial truth, which means their truth mingled with error . . . by these half truths many are brought into relation with the highest realities of religion and the very Gospel of God's love, perhaps better than by some further truth which they could not yet grasp. Is there not significance in the fact that the Bible itself is the history of half truths growing into larger fractions of truth, so that its different parts can still mediate truth to people at different stages of growth?

Amid the table-talk of Arnold Foster, the revered and independent missionary to the Chinese, I shall never forget one blazing outburst against the annexation of Buddhist temples for secular schools. He would not be sorry, he said, if Confucianism were to lose its hold, for that was the dead hand paralysing mental growth, but to secularize the Buddhist temples was to starve the instinct for worship before the people had learnt to put a truer worship in its place. Yet at first sight, I thought to myself, Confucianism contains far less absolute falsehood than the gross idolatry of degenerate Chinese Buddhism. On that Foster would have answered that, if Confucianism had less that was false,

it had also less vision of ultimate reality, and that under the corruptions of Buddhism there lay a feeling after God without which society would always be sub-human. He was convinced, in other words, that God was using a religion with a large coefficient of error to teach the Chinese their dependence on a power outside themselves.

Indeed unless we are to arraign the moral government of the world, and to believe that God has left Himself without witness in the centuries before Christianity and in the great civilizations which since the Christian era have not known or accepted the Christian message, we are compelled to admit that some measure of saving truth can be conveyed by religions in which there are considerable elements of myth and superstition.

The same applies to Christianity and to the Judaism out of which it grew. The movement which abolished the high places and centralized all worship in Jerusalem was in part misleading, so misleading that the Fourth Gospel reports Jesus as saying that worship in spirit and truth should no longer be associated with any place. Yet compared with what went before, it represented a notable advance in truth, for it swept away the barbaric cults of a number of petty Baals, each manifesting one restricted aspect of the divine to the confused thinking of the worshippers. Thus the centralization of worship implanted the idea that God was one. The doctrine of retributory punishment, libel on God as we now see it to be, had its vogue because it impressed on men the seriousness of wrongdoing. And when we come to Christianity itself, we find that truth and error have been intermingled in doctrines by which men have been saved. We no longer treat the power to perform miracles as a proof of deity. We cannot believe that God, the holy Father, would wish us to treat it so. Yet thousands have been first drawn by the story of the miracles to find significance in Jesus Christ. In the same way the doctrine of a substitutionary atonement under forms which we should reject to-day, brought peace with God to many and set them free to do moral service from which the world has reaped immeasurable gain.

There should then be nothing to surprise us in the thought that God has taught the lessons of His love and holiness to previous generations through a doctrine of Incarnation which we now find ourselves unable to hold. The influence to which our forefathers and ourselves have owed so much, lay in the reality which the doctrine included and not in its admixture of error. Indeed, whether we like it or not, we may be sure that the most advanced thinkers of our own time are gaining strength to serve the Kingdom of God from conceptions which later generations will completely recast in order to bring them into closer correspondence with reality as they see it then. For in this " beneficent ministry of illusion " the kernel of reality is there and it is that which counts. It is an unreasoning fear that in the end goodness will prove to be based upon a " noble lie."

The summary, therefore, of this chapter is that, if in our study of the Gospels we find cause to distrust the orthodox representation of Jesus as God the Son, none of the supports of the old doctrine which we have examined has inherent authority sufficient to demand that in spite of our distrust we should accept that representation.

IX

Summary

Jesus the greatest figure in the world's history. What of the attempts to explain him?

Further passages in the Synoptics apparently incompatible with the belief in his divinity. Different levels of belief were natural among the first groups of Christians. In Acts the Christology is undeveloped and opponents know of no claim for Jesus higher than Messiahship. Even in the Epistles there are numerous passages teaching in some measure the 'subordination' of Jesus Christ. The main trend of the New Testament is towards enthroning Jesus as God the Son, but these other passages show the perplexity through which the Church reached its creed.

In the Synoptics what do we discover of the self-consciousness of Jesus? Evident tendency to 'heighten' statements helpful to belief.

The idea of 'Christ,' *i.e.* 'Messiah,' was central. Its varied lineage. Its fluid meaning an advantage for propaganda about Jesus.

Jesus claimed to be Messiah, a conception which at that time was the only possible expression for a movement of spiritual advance, but modified it by introducing the traits of Wisdom and the Suffering Servant.

His early preaching, however, not of Messiahship but of the Kingdom of God. That idea too he transformed. Extension of, and growing confidence in, his mission led on inevitably to greater assurance that he was the Messiah.

In that conception a decisive element was the thought of Sonship, to which he added that of the Suffering Servant. He anticipated danger and ordeal; did he know it would be death? Indications that he was not altogether prepared for death.

Why then did he go to death? He must establish the Messianic Kingdom in Jerusalem, even at mortal risk challenging the established system, or his message would have lacked sincerity.

His love to men and belief in vicarious suffering. Without the Cross his Gospel would never have dominated the world.

But in all this is there any claim going beyond Messiahship?

Appendix C. Four passages examined in detail, with special reference to Matt. xi. 25–30, Luke x. 21 f.

IX

THE CLAIMS MADE FOR JESUS

From the day when the listeners went out of the Synagogue in Capernaum saying excitedly to one another: "What is this? A new message with power to it!" the words and life of Jesus have stirred the world. He who feels most grateful for the heights to which the Old Testament attained, who insists most earnestly upon the wonder of the Hebrew understanding of God, can have no doubt of the contrast between the life of Jesus and all lives lived before him. In spite of his continuing influence upon those who came after, inspiring them and lifting them nearer to his level, the contrast with them too is as decisive.

We may accept the story that his relatives thought him mad: that of itself shows that his personality was out of the common. The expansion of records of miracle is an indication of the difficulty his followers felt in picturing him as a man with capacities like their own. The divisions and even the fighting which have turned on the estimation men gave to him and his words,—take, for instance, the recent Prayer Book controversy—the books his religion has brought forth in a multitude which no other subject can rival, the way in which many of the world's heroes have looked to him for rebuke, reinforcement and courage, are all proofs of his lonely greatness. Newspapers get up stunts about him to increase their circulation, for even in an age which is called secular, any fresh thing about Jesus is good copy. The leaders of the Chinese revolution look back to him, while Mahatma Gandhi lectures upon him to his students and uses the Gospels as nourishment indispensable for his spiritual life. Men of goodwill, when they think with hope of a world progressing towards righteousness, in the same opera-

tion of the mind think inevitably of Jesus. From him have issued the most powerful influences for purity and the conquest of sin which the world has known, and myriads of souls have believed, and believe to-day, that he has been the means of their redemption.

He proclaimed the Kingdom of God; in our dreams we imagine it already in being; in our waking hours we recognize the unflinching self-dedication which carried him on his course to the inevitable Cross, and we fear that following him will cost too much. Yet in our prayers we can do nothing but beg that we may receive strength to follow.

The figure of Jesus is the greatest in the history of the race.

What then are we to say of the attempts to explain him which men so inevitably made?

Before we consider the sections of the Gospels endorsing the theory of his divinity, we must examine some further Synoptic passages which appear to suggest a humanity incompatible with that belief. The sentences in Mark x. 18 and Luke xviii. 19 where Jesus replies, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God only," are of the utmost importance. No commentator has been successful in explaining the words away, and they stand as a disclaimer of moral equality with God. Considering the awkwardness of the problem they have presented to apologetic in every Christian century we may wonder that they survive at all. The Matthæan tradition at some stage (see p. 86) did alter them. How many more such passages may have dropped out quietly as the first Christian communities told or wrote the stories of "the Lord"? Similarly the explanation that when, in the words of Psalm xxii. 1, Jesus cried on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he was referring obliquely to the confident faith expressed in the same Psalm twenty verses later, is too fine-spun to be convincing. When a woman called down blessings on the mother who had borne him (Luke xi. 27), Jesus turned the thought away from adulation of himself to the need for

hearing and obeying the will of God. Plainly he did not feel that reverence of so personal a character was likely to minister to sound religion, and it would even seem that he deprecated attention to himself. In Matt. xii. 32 and Luke xii. 10 there is the significant contrast between the forgivable sin of speaking against the Son of man and the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. This probably comes from Q and is therefore quite early. In Chapter V I suggested that it may be due to a misrepetition or misreading of a more original version which Mark has preserved : —" all sorts of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven to the sons of men, etc." * But it is also possible that Mark had the saying before him in the Q form and altered it because he thought it dangerous to his estimate of Jesus as divine. Whichever view we accept, it is interesting to note that so early an authority as Q is willing, even partly, to condone blasphemy against the Son of Man. The saying must have been treasured and handed down in a Church which gave Jesus a rank certainly lower than that of orthodox theology and apparently lower than that assigned in that particular Church to the Holy Spirit. The interpretation Jesus himself gives of his ability to cast out dæmons is that he does it, not in his own power, but in the spirit of God, and he apparently puts his power upon the same level as that of the Jewish exorcists (Matt. xii. 28, Luke xi. 20, from Q, Luke has " in the finger of God "). Mark ix. 37 and Luke ix. 48 transmit the verse about the receiving of a child which ends " and he that receives me receives Him that sent me." There is an ascending gradation, the child, Jesus, and God, which seems to set Jesus on an intermediate plane. Matthew has a slightly different verse with a similar gradation (x. 40).

The reason for such passages is obvious. When, after the experiences which convinced them that Jesus was risen, the first disciples attempted to explain the meaning of Messiahship and of the new glory they now saw in him, their explanations did not coincide. It would have been a miracle if they had done. The references suggesting that

* See pp. 119 f.

Jesus, though raised as Messiah to a level above ordinary humanity, did not reach the level upon which later theology placed him, are traces of views held by many in the early groups. The fact that these references are not compatible with the theology which won the victory makes it probable that they are either genuine sayings of Jesus or represent the conception of him current in Churches possessing a tradition that commanded general respect.

The same tendency meets us in the Acts. Although the history is sown thick with critical problems, it is impossible not to respect the restraint of the majority of the statements about Jesus put by the author into the mouth of the apostles and their opponents. These statements fall far below the doctrine of the Epistles and are worlds away from the atmosphere of the Apocryphal Gospels or the typical chap-book of miracles. Here I will only summarize. Peter tells the crowd at Pentecost (ii. 22) that they had crucified "Jesus of Nazareth, a man designated of God." In his speech to the Athenians Paul warned them that God would judge the world "in a man whom He has ordained" (xvii. 31). All the power of Jesus is from God. God has long ago commissioned him as Messiah, and, after an interval in heaven, his rightful place, will send him once again at the time of the restoration of all things (iii. 20). Peter teaches Cornelius that "God was with" Jesus (x. 38), and never advances in the rest of the speech beyond the idea that he was the Messiah. In several places conversion is described as turning to God, with no mention of Jesus, while it is God who brings the harvest from the apostles' sowing (xiv. 27, xv. 4, etc.). Again, the phrase for the Christian message is "the word of God," or "the kingdom of God," and when Aquila and Priscilla instruct Apollos in the new religion the phrase used is "they explained to him more accurately the way of God." Since Apollos already held the faith as taught by John the Baptist, we should have looked for words expressing what, in the doctrine of the Christians, was over and above that faith.

It is worth while also to examine the terms in which opponents express what they have to say against Christianity,

or outside observers define what they regard as its distinguishing mark. The Jewish authorities never charge the disciples with preaching Jesus as God the Son. Gamaliel treats the claim as one of Messiahship, and compares Jesus with other Messiahs whose movements had collapsed. It is hard to believe that he would have argued for tolerance, or have so easily secured it, if he and the Sanhedrin had known that the disciples were preaching Jesus, not only as Messiah, but as God incarnate. In Thessalonica the Jews accuse the Christians of proclaiming another King, Jesus. Here, of course, the reference is purely Messianic. Nothing in Acts suggests that the controversy went beyond this or that it ever reached as high as the claim that Jesus was God incarnate. Yet, if that claim had been made, Jewish polemic would have been sure to concentrate upon it. Festus explains to Agrippa (xxv. 19) that the quarrel of the Jews with Paul turns " on their superstition and upon a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul alleged to be alive."

Throughout the book the relation of Jesus to God is never clear, but in several of the passages the author speaks of " the name of Jesus " as effective for miracle or redemption. This indicates that, while the ultimate power is with God, the name of Jesus is the master-word by which it is set aworking. Does not the phrase cover a difficulty about the meaning of the divinity of Jesus, which the author feels inadequate to face? Another impression is that, taking the Acts as a whole, there is a remarkable insistence upon the Resurrection, and indeed that in the mind of the author and of the circles from which he drew his material the fact that Jesus had risen and so opened for believers the gate through death to life, counted for more than his divine Sonship.

Across the page I said that such representations fell below the Christology of the Epistles. Yet in the Epistles themselves there are many statements implying what the theologians call the " subordination " of Jesus Christ. Over and over again Paul and the other writers allow us to see that they thought of God as the governing, operative force in all the Christian movement. Even in the Epistles with

the most exalted doctrine of Jesus, Ephesians and Colossians, Jesus does not act of his own divine right. God is the ultimate source of all his message and activity of redemption. As Romans vi. 10 puts it, Jesus after his resurrection "lives for God," that is, to the satisfaction of the divine will. He does not raise himself from the dead, though as God the Son he must have the power and right to do so; it is God who raises him. He is the image of God and God's glory shines in his face. God "designated him Son of God in power according to a spirit of holiness when he was raised from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). God sent him on his mission and in it all he was fulfilling the divine will. Even in the great verses of Phil. ii. 5–11 which depict Jesus of free choice abandoning the form of God which belonged to him, it is not he who exalts himself to his rightful glory and worship, but God. Further, in the following lines when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, this triumph redounds not to his glory but "to the glory of God the Father." That "God was in him reconciling the world to Himself" (II Cor. v. 19) means that Jesus did his work by virtue of that higher endowment.

At the end Christ, whose Kingdom is apparently terminable when he has conquered his foes, will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father, who made all things subject to Christ, and will be himself subject to the Father, in order that God may be all in all (I Cor. xv. 24–28). This statement is so decisive as to create perplexity in orthodox commentaries.

In the same direction point the many verses which show Jesus to have been the transmitter, the vehicle or the mediator (in less theological language the intermediary) of God's mercy and grace. He is able to occupy this position because he is nearer to man and what he transmits is something which not he but only God the Father can supply. In one interesting passage (I Cor. viii. 6) Paul varies the prepositions to make a careful discrimination between God the creator and Jesus Christ the instrument in creation, God to whom our souls must rise and Jesus Christ who is the means of our rising. In xi. 3 God is the head of Christ.

It fits with this that Jesus is linked with humanity as a created being. Paul takes "first-born," a term of current mysticism, and uses it to indicate that faith puts his many brethren in some respects upon a level with Jesus. We are joint heirs with Christ, an equality which we could never apply to ourselves and God.

Hebrews has passages so plainly making Jesus subordinate that they drove von Hügel to condemn the author's "obscure and inadequate manner of conceiving His Divinity." * In Rev. iii. 2–12 Jesus speaks five times of "my God," much as might any other prophet or apostle, while the Fourth Gospel offers parallels to all these texts of the Epistles which put Jesus on a step below the throne of God Himself. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus seeks the glory of Him who sent him, he worships God and his great mission is to open the way to the Father. He himself is the way, but the Father is the goal of the believer's pilgrimage.

We are thus left with the impression of an intermediate being, higher than, but in some ways comparable to, one of the more exalted demigods of Greece, and receiving a worship not altogether unlike that which later Roman theology gave to the Virgin Mary. Here Jesus is not the second Person of the Trinity, he is a human figure lifted above men and angels, yet not to the full height of deity.

Some may be inclined to explain away the inference from these quotations by insisting that, when Jesus is pictured as the agent by whom God reaches men, that is neither more nor less than the orthodox doctrine that Jesus is himself very God of very God. The statement that God acts through him means only, they would maintain, that as God incarnate he brings to bear on men that Godhead which is an essential part of his unified personality. But this will not do. In most of the passages just noted this interpretation would be forced, and it is impossible to hold it against such verses as Rom. viii. 34, where Jesus intercedes for us as suppliant before God, or Eph. v. 2, where Paul writes that Jesus surrendered himself for us to be an offering and sacrifice to God. No one can intercede

* *Essays and Addresses*, Second Series p. 192, quoted earlier, p. 141.

with himself or present himself as a sacrifice to himself. The attempt to conceive such relations in the Godhead produces some of those unreal distinctions of Trinitarian theology which suggest the handiwork of the psychological artificer. In any case Paul was not thinking in images so subtle.

Over against these sections implying subordination there is no need to quote the other sections and verses of every part of the New Testament which enthrone Jesus at the right hand of God, as Saviour and Revealer, as pre-existent and the instrument of creation, and which offer to him worship indistinguishable from that given to the Father Himself. Probably by the death of Paul this view was in the ascendant; or if not this, still something which could have no logical completeness until it developed into the Trinitarian view. The only fair summary of the New Testament is that the passages ranking Jesus below God are all but buried under the advancing drift of orthodox conviction. But they remain as a proof of the mental perplexity which beset the first Christian theologians. Those most ready to deify Jesus did not come to the orthodox view all at once, and when they did, there were large regions of their thinking where inconsistency lingered on. In these early days some of whom we know nothing—it was to no one's interest to mention them—may well have receded from the intermediate position when they began to feel that it formed the outer court of a temple in which they were not prepared to worship.* For in regard to Jesus the intermediate position is only tenable for a short period,

* That there were strange controversies about Christology of which we have little trace is revealed by I Cor. i. 12, where a party calls itself the party "of Christ," while other parties, claiming to be on the same level, are curiously content to name themselves after Paul, Cephas and Apollos. Again, in xii. 3 Paul conceives it possible that a member of the Church, not otherwise distinguishable from the rest, might call out in his excitement "Cursed be Jesus!" (Moffatt). We should learn much if we could uncover the history which these two verses suggest. In a passage glowing with adoration of Jesus and full of incentives to worship him, it is significant to find that, when the eleven disciples met Jesus in Galilee, "as they saw him, they worshipped, but *some doubted*" (Matt. xxviii. 17). The story of Thomas in John xx. shows that there were doubters at the time of the writing of the Gospel who might be helped by Thomas' example.

much as a tired swimmer may rest for a moment upon a submerged rock, till the next high wave floats him away. The Christian who cannot be satisfied to hold his judgment permanently in suspense must either go on to the doctrine of the Creeds, however unintelligible he may find it, or he must treat Jesus as a man who enjoyed a special, but still human, fellowship with God. The value of the evidence that we have just reviewed is that it indicates a stage at which the Church had not made up its mind.

So far, however, we have not examined the arguments from the self-consciousness of Jesus. What did he think and teach about himself? What did his actions offer as ground for the stupendous claim the apostles made for him?

Once more we must insist that the balance of the material before us is altered now that we are compelled by scholarship to surrender the historicity of the Fourth Gospel. As a whole the Church has not drawn the inevitable conclusions from this fact. The Gospel of John, it was generally agreed in this country forty years ago, sprang from a closer intimacy than the other evangelists enjoyed and through its reminiscences unveiled the real significance of the life of Jesus. Therefore Matthew, Mark and Luke were never of the first importance for the doctrine of Christ's divinity. They were useful as giving different lights upon the figure standardized by the Fourth Gospel and they were interpreted accordingly. Christians read the Synoptic Gospels with their minds made up. But now we can no longer rest upon the Fourth Gospel. For evidence of how Jesus lived and spoke, the first three Gospels stand alone. That fundamentally modifies the problem set before us.

The conclusion of Chapter IV was that in the Synoptics we must allow for the inclination to heighten the colours in which the strictest accuracy would have painted the portrait of Jesus. Here we need only add that it is precisely in the sentences supporting the Church's doctrine of

the exaltation of Christ that this heightening is most probable. Several of the instances discussed in the earlier chapter show an alteration by Matthew or Luke of some text bearing on this point, and, speaking generally, we may say that they made the alteration for this and for no other cause. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that, if this happens where by comparison with another document we can "control" the change, the same thing may have happened in much the same proportion where a statement is found in one Gospel alone. For example, in Matt. v. 11, "say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake," the Greek word for "falsely" breaks the rhythm of the sentence and looks like the addition of someone who wished to insist that the Christian whose conduct had deserved reproach would have no share in the beatitude. If we regard "falsely" as an addition, there is even stronger reason to regard "for my sake" at the end of the sentence as a further addition.* Similarly the reverence of some Christian community would naturally insert in Matt. xviii. 6 the words "in me" after Mark's "believe." † And when they had been repeated with the story half a dozen times, he would have been a brave man who questioned them. How could he prove the negative? Matt. xiii. 37 explains that the sower of the good seed in the parable of the tares is the Son of Man. But the explanation of the parable does not seem to come from Jesus and in the Church this particular identification would easily arise.

Again, the point is sometimes made that Jesus draws a distinction between the relation of the disciples to God and his own relation by the words "your Father" and "my Father." It is true that Matthew reports Jesus as using "my Father" frequently, and that the instances are for the most part in the latter half of the book, where we might conceive Jesus, lonely and misunderstood, as dwelling on his unique fellowship with God; but the other two

* Some Western MSS. omit "for my sake." Some of the same and some other MSS. (supported by quotations in the Fathers) omit "falsely."

† In Mark ix. 42 "believe" alone is probably the best reading, though some good MSS. add "in me."

evangelists give no corroboration. The uses of "my" are almost all in passages peculiar to Matthew or in phrases which the author appears to have edited. Further, it is characteristic of Matthew that except in xi. 25–27 and xxiv. 36 (both probably from a special source) Jesus never speaks of God as Father without a personal pronoun. Thus we can scarcely infer more than that the author put in these pronouns as they suited his style, his personal views, or the Church tradition to which he was accustomed.

Here and there we must recognize the possibility that the feeling of the Christian groups led them to alter words or phrases. It is surprising to note how often orthodox commentaries suggest that this has happened. The very fact that some of these passages give such useful reinforcement to the doctrine prevalent in the Church must make us cautious in receiving them.

The standard expression of the first faith of the Church is found in the word "Christ," the translation of the Hebrew "Messiah," anointed. To understand Jesus we must follow this path. The expectation of a Messiah by the Jews is one of the most interesting movements of religious history. In Hinduism there is still the hope of an *avatar* * of Vishnu at the end of an evil age, and the Shi'ite sect of Islam believes that the twelfth Imām will manifest himself to men. But the vividness, the increasing elevation of the idea, the tenacity with which it was held by numerous groups among a suffering people, are surely peculiar to Judaism.

It is impossible to trace one consistent lineage for the anticipation. Perhaps the earliest hope was for a king, human in the view of some and semi-divine hero in the view of others. He would sit at God's right hand and by God's power would restore the fallen state of Israel, and punish or even annihilate their ancient foes. In contrast with the brute force of the pagan empires, Daniel had seen a personification of the people of Israel, a Son of Man,

* Earthly and partial manifestation under some animal or human form, not a descent to earth of the god in his full personality.

human and not animal, not savage but humane (Daniel vii. 13 : see p. 171). The author of the Similitudes in the Book of Enoch * took over this personification and put " the Son of Man " on the apocalyptic stage as an individual Messiah, originating with God rather than upon earth, the most exalted figure among the many angels, principalities and powers with which the imagination of the apocalyptists peopled the space between man and God. Every writer of this type of prophecy appropriated from these main elements, and indeed from anywhere else, exactly what suited him, and the same was doubtless true of the groups of amateur theologians who sat by shop doors in the city or under the shadow of the village gate. As the result of it all, the idea was widely spread that a leader would come, anointed of God, to help to inaugurate the changes for which the faithful longed. He might be a superhuman figure, angelic to the point of being all but divine ; but he might just as well be a man of the prophetic mould, with an unusual aptitude for grasping and interpreting the will of God. The ambiguity of expectation was favourable to the choice of any given individual as Messiah. Leaders of many types might seem to be qualified for the office and the Messiah's mission might be presented in many different forms. Further, once a man was accepted as Messiah it was natural enough to clothe him in the great attributes of which an exalted apocalyptic had dreamed.

The fact that Jesus chose the Messianic conception as the fittest description of his mission, made it easier for the early Church to develop its doctrine of the Person of Christ. There was written authority for each step in the growth of the doctrine, short of the final designation as God the Son. Since, too, the definitions of the Messiah were so fluid, those who believed less about the superhuman significance of Jesus, those who only went part way, could unite in one fellowship with the more daring thinkers and feel that all were one in glorifying " Jesus the Messiah." The Church

* Notably c. xlvi. According to R. H. Charles, the Similitudes belong to 94–79 or 70–64 B.C., two or three generations later than Daniel. See also pp. 163, 172.

could draw into its ranks one by one those attracted by the promise of redemption through Jesus and willing to admit his Messiahship on a level near the human, and then could go on to train them inside its fellowship to ever advancing stages of faith and adoration.

To the unbiassed judgment it would seem impossible to understand the Gospels except with the key that Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah. Evidently he had read deep in the Messianic literature and pondered over it. If he really used the title "Son of Man" for himself, he took it from that literature but with characteristic originality altered its shade of feeling.* With the wonted apocalyptic features of the Messiah he blended, it would appear, traits from the personifications of the Wisdom literature.† In an age looking for a Messiah the strongly personal phrasing of many of the poems about Wisdom would suggest itself to a reflective mind as a further contribution to the doctrine, and it is likely enough that, as Jesus was the first to graft the imagery of the Suffering Servant upon the Messianic stock, so he used the attributes of Wisdom to enlarge his conception of the true Messiah.

In that epoch it was almost inevitable that the thought of any Jew conscious of a divine message should shape itself in the Messianic mould. A divine message must be a message of hope. Religion is the interaction of God and man, each as it were answering the other.‡ Now by that time the Jews had a notable, if partial, understanding of the answer men must give to God. That was expressed in the whole system of human duty defined in the Law and the interpretations of the Rabbis. But they could not make out what was the answer of God to man. They had looked for it in national prosperity. That vision the captivity had ended. The flower of a later expectation born

* See Appendix C, p. 242.

† Matt. xxiii. 34–37 puts the saying about God's continuous sending of prophets into the mouth of Jesus himself, but the parallel passage in Luke xi. 49 begins "Therefore the Wisdom of God says——" Of course this quotation may be due to the early Church, but Jesus himself may perhaps have made it. See p. 108.

‡ Compare the beautiful phrases about the back and forward answer of God and the earth in Hosea ii. 21 f.

of the successes of the Maccabees had been trampled down by the Romans. They had also looked for God's answer in individual prosperity, but this vision, too, had faded, as in explorations such as that of the Book of Job they were forced to admit that the good did not always prosper. While men did everything for God, they questioned, did God do anything for them? Did He answer at all? Religion could not advance, could indeed only precariously continue, unless this doubt could be laid to rest. The immediate predecessors of Jesus were searching in two directions, not far removed from each other, the first the Messianic expectation, the second the theory of resurrection. Of religious advance there was no other promise. We are here concerned with the first. It follows that for any Jewish preacher the Messianic anticipation was the natural dress to clothe a message of progress in faith and hope. Setting aside the nationalism of the zealots, whose methods of violence and external ideals were alike impossible to Jesus, his only natural appeal was to the expectation of the Messiah cherished by those looking for the "consolation" or "deliverance" of Israel. At that moment perhaps the greatest service a prophet could do was to take this Messianic expectation and make it more truly spiritual.

It is of the first importance to reflect how completely Jesus transformed the significance of Messiahship when he read into it the prophecies of the Suffering Servant. Just as the added chemical produces a compound quite different from its constituent elements or the graft upon a tree changes from that time the flavour of the fruit on all its branches, so by this new interpretation Jesus made a revolution, not in Judaism, but in religion itself. Henceforward men were compelled to look upon God differently and to use a different standard to test everything in human life or teaching claiming to be a revelation of Him. The day of the Kings of the Gentiles was ended, ended too the domination of the philosopher or the worshipful expounder of the Law; from that time onward the leader in religion must be the lowly servant, one prepared to suffer for love's sake. That revolution transformed the conception of God also.

He was no longer predominantly the Lord of Hosts, riding on the storm and throned in awful splendour; He was that, *plus* another range of attributes revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus, attributes of love that was strong because it endured to the point of pain. And the *plus* changed men's thought of God to its foundation. We are trying still to work out that teaching and its implications for deed and worship. The centuries have often misrepresented it and often attempted to hew for themselves other cisterns; but the only cistern that holds living water is this ever new idea of God. No religion has the promise of a future which will not take as its touchstone this message of lordship fulfilled in service, of majesty in vicarious pain.

It is not likely, however, that the public ministry of Jesus or his teaching of the disciples at first included any reference to Messiahship. How difficult it is to read the Synoptic story aright, how serious are its problems and contradictions, scholars alone can testify, and in their positive construction and emphasis even they frequently disagree. But in spite of passages early in Mark which seem to point to Messiahship,* I think we shall find the best clue to the life of Jesus, if we explain his first months of public activity as a proclamation of the Kingdom of God. From the outset he was plainly a great teacher, and that involves a great theme. He followed the Baptist's expectation of a "day of the Lord," and then broke away upon a path of his own, so that thenceforward his party was quite separate from that of the Baptist and developed its message in a different direction.

The new path was a new interpretation of the Kingdom. Just as Jesus at once kept and transformed the idea of Messiahship, so he kept and at the same time transformed the current idea of the Kingdom. The majority of those before him understood the coming of the Kingdom to mean that God, the God of the nation, would catastrophically interpose in their favour. Those more spiritual were teaching that an attitude of repentance and personal righteousness

* See pp. 43, 66. I doubt if Q professed to give an ordered scheme of the life of Jesus. If it did, we cannot recover it.

was the condition of the Kingdom. For the most part Jesus taught that this attitude was not the condition of the Kingdom so much as the Kingdom itself. The Kingdom was a change of temper, value and aspiration, bringing a moral revolution in its train. In it neither ruler nor Pharisee would have place, but the meek and lowly of heart.

Yet Jesus did not throw away all the current conceptions of the Kingdom. He kept much, inconveniently much, of their outward framework and it is this which gives occasion to Schweitzer and others of the eschatological school to protest that we must interpret all his life and teaching in the light of the anticipation of a speedy, cataclysmic end. But the sections dwelling upon love, joy and service, not as conditions which would enable God to act, but as the goal to aim at and desire, are really more fundamental. It is true that Jesus did look and long for an external manifestation of the power of God to establish His Kingdom on earth, most likely in Jerusalem, but the mistake of the eschatological school is that they have not remembered that in the most characteristic thought of Jesus the Kingdom was a Kingdom organically different from that of common Apocalyptic. For Jesus the mechanical interposition was to have a spiritual result. The interest in the external happening was less than in the change it was to work upon the eager hearts of men. Indeed to speak of it as an interposition was only half the truth; the visitation from above needed also the co-operation of human spirits, just as God's activity in nature needs the soil and the life force of the seed. The Church has followed the main trend of this thought of Jesus in dwelling more upon the quality of the life to be lived in the Kingdom than on the cataclysm which was to usher it in.*

Probably the first sense of a compelling call to preach the nearness of the Kingdom came at his baptism by John. Plainly this was a crisis; the important story of the Temptation follows close and hinges upon it. The Temptation story Jesus may well have told to the disciples, for, though

* See pp. 112 ff., 157 ff.

we are not bound to accept every phrase or metaphor, we recognize exactly the spirit in which a mind like that of Jesus would respond to the summons at the baptism, the dangers it would foresee, the principles it would lay down. Soon after this his action was guided by a definite purpose of propaganda, and from their daily labour he called those whom he thought capable of becoming fishers of men. Crowds gathered to hear his message. He sent out mendicant preachers in all directions.

His whole prophetic bearing was lofty and it was also confident. We may conjecture that in the early days he had to feel his way, and that, as the inward urgency was reinforced by outward success, he became gradually more sure of his call. That he could tread with fuller assurance deepened the conviction of his followers, doubled his power to heal the sick bodies and souls around him, and made all men feel that, like him or dislike him, this man was impossible to ignore.

Even in the opening period of his ministry Jesus was able to give proofs to himself and to those around of a greatness which still after all these centuries reverberates round the world. We shall realize this if we remember the evidence from critics and antagonists,—evidence so far from the probability of fabrication that it may be trusted as good history. His official opponents had to account for his healings by the suggestion that he was in league with Beelzebub. Some performed exorcisms in his name (Mark ix. 38). When Herod inquired about him, the simplest explanation was that Jesus was a prophet worthy to rank with the famous ones of old, whose like had not been heard for centuries; but by other theories he was John Baptist actually risen from the dead, or that long-expected manifestation of Elijah. These are great conjectures—vesture such as no common man could wear.

Thus through all this process his sway grew stronger and more personal. Others were impressed by this prophet who healed the sick and spoke with authority. His power impressed himself. Before he was baptized, the lonely penetration with which he saw the imperfection of the Law and

its official applications had perhaps prepared him for a call from God singling him out from his fellows. By the time of his public ministry he recognized that God had given him such compelling certainty as to justify him in putting his own teaching in the place, not only of the traditional interpretations, but of the Law itself. To measure this innovation and the claim it involved we must let our imaginations play round the massive establishment of Rabbinic ascendancy. The prophet who could challenge that had gone far on the road to Messiahship. He was destroying the old religious fabric; how could he shirk the attempt to provide the new? And was not the provision of the new exactly the task of the Messiah?

It is quite likely, then, that, as the Gospels represent it, the summons to public ministry at the Baptism carried with it an inward designation to Messiahship.* Of this it is most natural to believe that he spoke nothing before the confession near Cæsarea Philippi, even to his disciples. † In the meantime, if his mind was governed by the ordinary principles of psychology, his conception of Messiahship grew in confidence and definiteness. That the official religion failed to meet the needs of the day, that the multitudes were as sheep without a shepherd, that he had a message with the passion of which he was possessed and that men hung upon it, that they acknowledged his power to heal,—all this would go to strengthen his call to Messiahship and to fill out its meaning.

The preaching of the Kingdom, therefore, led on with increasing urgency to an assertion of his own leadership. The Gospels report that he bade his followers give up all for him, the Messiah, and confess him before everyone.‡ As the end of "the little Apocalypse" in Mark xiii. asserts, he may have said that, though the heaven and earth should pass, his words should pass never. He told an inquirer that the way to life eternal was to disperse his wealth to the

* In Mark the voice and vision appear to come to Jesus alone.

† See pp. 43, 62.

‡ Of course these are just the passages where we should expect to find Christological heightening of phrase.

poor and then to join the disciple band. With the same authority, when the time came, he cleansed the Temple.

The disciples lived under an impression of power which after the Cæsarea Philippi confession they regarded as Messianic. They thought that Jesus could bring down fire upon a Samaritan village which closed its doors to him, and they looked to him to guarantee them chief honours in the glory to come. The entry into Jerusalem could not have taken place if the twelve and a good many besides had not been sleeping and waking in the eager expectation that Jesus would reveal himself as Messiah.

But, in spite of the risk of repetition, it is important to emphasize what was unique in Jesus' reading of Messiahship.

Jesus interpreted the Messianic idea with a difference, though even the disciples did not recognize this till after his death. He began not with the God who was King of Kings or Ancient of Days but with the Father. The strongest element in his consciousness was that of sonship. So much has been written on this that there is little room for added words. But if we are to understand Jesus, we must give reverent meditation to lift the phrases we know too well into a wonder which makes them, and all the history of Jesus, glow with new radiance for to-day. It is often said that Messiahship is a conception meaningless to the modern world. Happily the same does not hold of sonship. If the world can apprehend, even in a partial and imperfect degree, the sense of sonship which inspired all the life of Jesus, there will be many brethren to welcome into the divine family of which he was the first-born.

It was a Gospel of God, of man, of the significance of true religion, such as the world had not heard before. The men of the twentieth century at their best are still far from sounding its depths. It was a Gospel of power.

If, then, God was Father as Jesus saw Him, much of the apparatus of the Messianic expectation was barbaric and out of date. In his teaching there is no interest in the retribution to fall upon the neighbour nations for their insults and injuries to the chosen people. The pomp and show that clung round the hope of the Messiah's advent

are nothing to him; he is the Son of Man, who has come not to have servants, but to be a servant himself. The very title Son of Man, if Jesus used it,* involves a rejection of any ideas not based upon spiritual mastery, and if Mark is justified in reporting him as declaring to the high priest that he would appear in Messianic glory at the right hand of God, his thought was moving not in the material dreams of those who had used such phrases before, but within the conception of Messiahship which communion with God had revealed to him.

Then in the later days of his ministry, as it would seem, Jesus added a new thread to the fabric, a sombre thread but throwing all the pattern into sharper relief. He had studied the doctrine of the Suffering Servant in the Second Isaiah, and availing himself, like others, of the right to appropriate ideas from any quarter, he interwove the obligation to suffer with the previous traits of Messiahship. Of course he did not introduce this simply because it was in the Scriptures;—his mind worked upon the Old Testament with authority and made it serve his purpose—but because it expressed his feeling about Messiahship. From his reflection on Isaiah liii. and its sister passages, reflection sharpened by the growing menace of his experiences as he preached the Kingdom, we get the intimations of imminent suffering, perhaps of death, and all that underlay the Synoptic statements that he predicted his death in detail.

The motive for putting detailed predictions of the Passion into the mouth of Jesus was a strong one. The interest of the early Church was to show that, if Jesus died a felon's death upon the cross, he chose it with open eyes and of set purpose. To prove this it was requisite that he should know beforehand all that it would mean. On that reading his executioners were no longer an ugly blot on his story; they fell with quiet naturalness into the divine scheme. But we may doubt whether Jesus had this minute foreknowledge. Of this detail it is unlikely that he was the author (see p. 95).

Yet in some general way he anticipated the danger and

* See p. 243.

talked of it to his disciples. There were probably times when he foresaw death. If we may accept the suggestion of Klausner, the Jewish scholar, in his *Jesus of Nazareth*, Jesus thought that as Messiah he would have to pass through a period of suffering,—but stopping short of death. When that was ended he would appear in triumph. The Talmud called this fiery trial the "pangs of the Messiah." With characteristic scrupulousness Klausner admits that the Talmud gave no hint that the Messiah himself would share the pangs, and reminds us that the Talmud reference is long after the date of Jesus. Yet these difficulties are not final. The Talmudic conception corresponds to something current in his time. Apocalypse in certain of its forms (such as we see reflected in Mark xiii. and the apocalyptic chapters of Matthew and Luke) taught that the faithful would only reach the glorious consummation through a barrage-zone of anguish. This was the undertone of the word of Jesus to the sons of Zebedee about the baptism and the cup, together with other warnings more or less accurately reproduced. True, we find outside the New Testament no authority for an anticipation that the Messiah would suffer in his own person, but to that doubt we have sufficient answer in the creative originality of the mind of Jesus. It is, indeed, just the direction in which we should expect his originality to move. Once he had grafted the idea of the Suffering Servant on to that of the Messiah, it was natural to connect this suffering with the barrage through which the "sons of the Kingdom" would have to win. It was like him to prepare to take, not only his share, but the heaviest share, of the impending distress.

While we may well believe that Jesus faced an ordeal of suffering, even of agony, it is also probable that he *hoped* to be delivered before the final agony of death. As so often, C. G. Montefiore helps us here:

> Jesus may have had some dark ominous feeling that he was destined to suffer and die in Jerusalem. . . . For though the cry on the cross can be explained away, it is upon the whole somewhat more likely that the

> great *dénouement*, which, in the Gospel story, Jesus is represented as expecting to happen soon after his death, at his Parousia, he really expected to happen after his arrival at Jerusalem, and without the necessity of his death. It has been suggested that these predictions in Mark are founded upon a narrative in which the eventuality of death was merely indicated, and when the hope of a near triumph was more predominant. Jesus went to Jerusalem, led by a great hope, but without dissimulating to himself the possible danger.
>
> (*Synoptic Gospels*, I. p. 250. Macmillan.)

We shall find another key to the apprehension of Jesus in the keen sensitiveness with which he watched the signs of the times and realized how relentlessly the established religion would seek to crush any reformer who menaced its sway. Conscious that he was called to a direct challenge of the current system, in continuance and completion of his conflicts with the Scribes and Pharisees, he would read the stories of the prophets and draw the plain inference from the fate of those whose message had cost their life. He would add to these the dirge of the Servant who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and by oppression and judgment was taken away, a dirge with a promise in its ending which had never yet found application or fulfilment. There is no doubt that he counted the cost.

But I think even as to the cost he wavered. For all his overmastering sense of dedication, he did not want to die, just as we do not want to die. To us who know the outcome of his Passion, it is easy to form some crude estimate of the effectiveness of his dying, but to him the outcome was unknown. He had worked and prayed that men might accept God's rule and enter into His Kingdom, and to him it must have seemed that the fabric he had built would collapse in ruin if he himself should perish. For the Kingdom's sake he must have wished to live. Sometimes he hoped that they would win through to victory and that he would appear in triumph, that some would not taste of death until they had seen the Kingdom of God come in

power. Sometimes he was filled with apprehension, as when upon the last stage to Jerusalem the agitation that was on him could not be concealed from the disciples and, following in a group behind, they were afraid too. In the garden he found that he had underrated the bitterness of the cup which he had promised to James and John, while on the cross there was plainly a moment at which the hope of the Kingdom died and he lost the sense of communion with God and faced the dark alone, as much alone as any of us. Here was something he had not foreseen. For this ultimate agony even his high spirit had not been able to prepare.

Why then did he go to his death?

So much as that I do not pretend to understand. I can only move about the mystery and about it again, reporting the little that I can see for what it is worth. Men prospect round a peak hitherto unscaled and describe the inferences their telescopes allow,—poor inferences which later expeditions will correct, and yet the best, if unprejudiced, that these explorers can supply. Others some day will climb further and verify or disprove their provisional constructions. And on this sacred peak others with the fuller grace of God will climb higher and will report more truly, though for many a day, perhaps for always, the summit will remain virgin;—we shall not easily exhaust the meaning of the death of Jesus.

Yet here and now we must do the best we can. What can one see with a little telescope and eyes unschooled to read the signs so far above?

In the first place it is evident that the common Messianic expectations required the Messiah to go to Jerusalem and there take command. One of the most important parts of the programme was the coming of a new Jerusalem, sometimes, it was taught, by the purification of the old city and of the hearts of its citizens, sometimes by a complete replacement from heaven. The Messiah was the Son of David and must ascend the throne in David's city. A Messiah with no hold but on Galilee, and a precarious hold at that, could never be more than a pretender. At all costs Jesus must make the venture.

But let us put aside the Messianic idea, the Jewish garment

in which, simply because he was a Jew, Jesus inevitably dressed his universal teaching, and let us try to see what the principles of his mission must demand. Imagine a prophetic soul surrendered to the message of the Father's love with which Jesus was possessed, and ask how he could reach men. Such a messenger, however conditioned by the nationalist writings on which his mind had fed and by the limitations of his surroundings, must feel that his message was not for Jews alone, but for mankind. Of course, this is not to say that, except in some rare moment of exaltation, Jesus saw any geographic vision of the nations, only that he realized how far-reaching was the qualitative impact of his Gospel. It was for all men in their universal need. Yet he thought and expressed himself in Jewish terms. Plainly if he was to reach the world, there was no way out through Tyre or Damascus, no pulpit in Athens or in Rome. (Did he ever dream of such a possibility as he wandered towards Cæsarea with the twelve?) He could not have spoken the idiom of such audiences, and before them he would have had to strip his expression of all its natural associations and preconceptions. The only gate of enfranchisement for the influence of Jesus was through the sacred city of his own people. Here was the system through which his ideas had grown and against which they had measured themselves. Here he must carry his spiritual leadership to its next stage, and challenge everything that was ungodly in the old tradition. Here he must stand forth as God's instrument to establish His Kingdom, to destroy the material temple and build a spiritual temple in its place, the universal assurance of a living communion with the Father. If in the travail of a fresh revelation its prophet must perish, it was not possible for him to perish outside Jerusalem.

Looking back from this distance we cannot avoid the impression that if, after a prophetic activity which was all challenge, he had failed to challenge Jerusalem, his message would have lacked sincerity. He had spoken of a Kingdom in which the frigidities of law would give way to love, in which the gladness of sonship would make life a new thing. Whatever the risk of suffering and death, it would have

been a more fatal death, the death of his divine commission, if he had not pressed his mission through. There was one of the differences between him and weak-willed ordinary men; he pressed things through;—and he must do this in the centre of his people's faith and devotion. If Jesus had remained in Galilee or retired to some safe hermitage in the desert, men would not have listened to him as they do to-day, for they would have felt a tinge of unreality in his call to others to risk all for the sake of God's Kingdom. Without doubt the voice that bade him stay upon the mount of Transfiguration was from Satan.

One reason for his sway over the hearts of men was his love. When he taught his disciples to love their enemies, we can guess how much he had to offer to his friends. When he saw the crowds as sheep without a shepherd or as harvest already ripe, and when he wept over Jerusalem, he showed the imaginative love to which only the greatest ever attain. Since beyond all his fellows he had apprehended the Fatherhood of God, he knew that he was son of God in a unique degree, but also that he must bring life to the impoverished and deliverance to the bound by convincing them that they too were sons. He must set this gospel in clear contrast with the demands of mere law and ritual, he must give men a new, emancipating view of the meaning of religion, if the extent of his message was to have any relation to its inherent worth. He could do this nowhere but in Jerusalem. Any influence he might gain elsewhere would be too little influential, as long as the old system held the religious field. He took the risks because he wanted to bring God to the multitudes. It was love that took him there to die.

In that sense he may have said that he came "to give his life a ransom for many." It may have been this conviction which led him to speak of his body and blood at the Last Supper.

To one who had pondered and pondered again the details of the picture of the Suffering Servant, there was much to convince him that his suffering would avail for the sin and misery of men.

Surely he hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we did esteem him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed.

. . . . . .

The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

. . . . . .

For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

. . . . . .

By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many:
And he shall bear their iniquities.

. . . . . .

Yet he bare the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

(Isaiah liii.)

The suffering before him was vicarious, in that, like almost all the suffering which the holiest have to bear, it was forced on him by others; but it was also vicarious in that its effect would be available for those others through influences laying naked before them the evil of their hearts and in some mysterious way making more possible a reconciliation with righteousness. The suffering which good men bear for others adds to the healing forces of the universe. That we cannot explain the process does not in the least invalidate the intuition by which we are assured of this. Jesus saw that, if he died, it would be for the sake of mankind. In this sense we can echo Paul—"Who loved me and gave himself for me."

There is no doubt that, but for the death, the Gospel would never have dominated the world as it has done through the centuries. In the life of Jesus the Cross is fundamental. It is fundamental in all good life. Walter Smith has expressed it in *Olrig Grange:*

But all through life I see a cross,
Where sons of God yield up their breath:
There is no gain except by loss,
There is no life except by death,
There is no vision but by Faith,
Nor glory but by bearing shame,
Nor justice but by taking blame;
And that Eternal Passion saith,
"Be emptied of glory and right and name."

Jesus said to his followers, "he that saveth his life, shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall save it." He could never have made men believe this by his words, even with all the backing of his personality. He must prove it by his own deed before the world would understand that here was the secret of reality. If he had saved his life, he would have been merely ineffective. To risk its surrender was the only natural authentication of his teaching.

Whatever be its spiritual explanation, the death of Jesus as a matter of history has gripped the attention of men and etched his figure on the world's imagination. The death was the crown of his life. On a summer Sunday morning, about 1900, John Morley came in from the garden to A. M. Fairbairn's study with a book in his hand. "I've just been reading again," he said, "the account of the death of Jesus. If that story were preached as it ought to be, it would move the world!" Inadequately as it has been preached, it has done more to move the world than any other story. Jesus has drawn men to him because he was faithful unto death. The evangelists obeyed a true instinct when they allotted a quarter of their space to the record of the Passion.

But in the story of the life and the death, as we have it in the first three Gospels, is there any claim that cannot be accounted for by the consciousness that he was the Messiah? In other words, notwithstanding the data we examined earlier that seemed to prove Jesus human like ourselves, is there any evidence which still compels us to accept the

doctrine of incarnation? The conviction that he was the anointed of God, destined to bring deliverance to his people, would make him feel that he spoke as a representative of his race and of more than his race. That feeling would give assurance to his thinking and edge to his speech. Some of the sayings which have been taken as proofs of divinity, because they directed attention to himself or called men to follow him, may, if genuine, have originated from this confidence. In all this, however, there is nothing that goes beyond the expression of Messiahship, and, as we have seen, there was nothing in the idea of Messiahship to make it necessary that the Messiah should be more than man. Much in the life of Jesus renders it improbable that he ever imagined himself to be divine or read into Messiahship implications of divinity higher than any dream of those before him. It is reasonable enough to believe that he looked forward to a Messianic exaltation and to a return in power, but most of the Messianic teaching on which he drew involved no more than a man called to a task which he could only fulfil with supernatural aid. Even the Similitudes of Enoch, when they represent the Son of Man as pre-existent and of a nature inherently more than human, do not represent him as one with God (see p. 172). In so far, therefore, as the Church founded the doctrine of the incarnation upon the first three Gospels, it seems likely that we owe it to inferences from passages which Jesus did not mean to express so immense a personal claim.

APPENDIX C

Four Passages Examined in Detail

There are four passages which still require examination because they may be thought to go beyond any phrases which we should have expected Jesus to use in the capacity of Messiah.

1. "That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark ii. 10, Matt. ix. 6, Luke v. 24). All three evangelists treat this saying as the assertion of an authority characteristic of God. The fact that in Mark there is no grammatical sequence to the sentence, and that neither of the other

two dares to correct this awkward realism, shows that the apostolic Church set special store by the wording of this record. But in the early part of the narrative all that Jesus said to the paralytic was "Your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees at once seized on this as blasphemy, and from that the evangelists take their cue in the further dialogue. Yet it implies in itself no more than a declaration that God has forgiven the man. In that light it seems reasonable to regard the words "has power on earth to forgive sins" as meaning "power to declare forgiveness." Further, it is probable that "the Son of Man" here is the Aramaic idiom for "man" in a generalized sense. Those, however, who do not accept this should remember that, in the belief of the early Church, the "power to forgive sins" does not always involve divinity. This is shown by John xx. 23, where after conferring the Holy Spirit upon the disciples Jesus goes on to say, "If you forgive the sins of any, they shall be forgiven." Surely God could confer on Jesus the man, what in the Church's estimation the risen Jesus could confer on very fallible disciples.

2. Mark ii. 28 gives the words of Jesus as follows:—"The Son of Man is lord also of the sabbath." Matt. xii. 8 and Luke vi. 5 reproduce the sentence, Matthew without "also." Matthew regards it as a claim to superhuman dignity, for he inserts just before it, "one greater than the temple is here." But Mark suggests the real explanation. He prefaces it with the verse "The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath." It is therefore likely that here again "the Son of Man" means simply "man." *

3. Much has been built on the well-known passage reproduced with impressive agreement by Matt. xi. 25–27 and Luke x. 21–22, perhaps from Q.†

* There has been much discussion whether Jesus could have used the title "Son of Man." Some Aramaic scholars maintain that the idiom of the language allows of no difference between "Son of Man" and "man." Though I know no Aramaic, after a careful study of the arguments I am left with the impression that this case is not proven. It is possible that by emphasis or intonation Jesus may have singled out the phrase and given it mystic emphasis—compare "The Man" of the Hermetic literature and Philo, or, coming to this century, the use by Germans of "The Day."

† It is peculiarly important to remember here that we have no evidence that everything we call Q is from one document and has the same date, origin and value. Q is only a symbol for the total of the passages in which, without depending on Mark, Luke and Matthew agree together. It is obvious that these agreements may be due to the use of more than one document. I suspect that this passage is taken from a smaller source, distinct from the larger agglomeration which made up the bulk of Q.

> I extol thee, Father, lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and intellectual and hast revealed them to babes; yes, Father, I extol thee that thy will has so ordained it. Everything was entrusted to me by my Father, and no one except the Father knows the Son, nor does any know the Father except the Son and those to whom he chooses to give the revelation.

There is nothing in the first half of this which might not be said by any humble mystic, conscious of the mercy of God's intimacy with the lowly. It is the second portion which is taken as a proof of the divinity of Jesus. What are we to say? Let us begin with the text as it stands.

(*a*) It is unlikely that the second portion originally belonged to the former. The first half is addressed *to* the Father in praise; the second half is a statement *about* the Father and the Son.

(*b*) The style of the second half is sharply marked. Its wording has a ring different from any other passage in the Synoptics; * and reminds the reader at once of the Fourth Gospel. As often in that Gospel it puts into the mouth of Jesus an estimate in the third person of his significance. Many students, therefore, believe that these verses come from some small fellowship where men were meditating on the person of Christ and expressing their conclusions in words which they attributed to himself. In spite of all the difficulties of explaining how words from a Johannine fellowship should find their way into the sources of Matthew and Luke at what must have been a comparatively early date, the style is characteristically Johannine. This theory does not, of course, derive them from the tradition of the Fourth Gospel in its developed form, but from the first output of a group beginning to compose upon the lines of the Johannine literature. It is not a serious objection that the mass of that literature was published later. If the Fourth Gospel was a 'history' based on a series of meditations, the writer of the meditations must have begun his work well before the date of the edited Gospel, and it is quite likely that some of his first fragmentary nuclei were published among a small circle

* Except perhaps Mark xiii. 32: "About that day or hour no one but the Father knows, not even the angels nor even the Son," with its parallel in Matthew; and again Luke xxii. 66 f.: "And they led him away to their council, saying 'If you are the Messiah, tell us.' He said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask [questions], you will not answer."

Unfortunately both passages are too short to allow of a confident judgment.

by A.D. 80. Such a fragment as this would attract immediate attention.

Or there may be another explanation. It is important that Matthew goes on:

> Come to me, all you who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart and you shall find rest for your souls: for my yoke fits easy and my burden is light.

Since Luke does not add these verses, here or elsewhere, it seems improbable that they stood in their common source after the declaration of sonship. Indeed we may infer that he did not know them, for they are so closely akin to the distinctive spirit of his Gospel that he would scarcely have left them out.

What then led the Matthæan editor to place them here? The obvious answer is that the humility of the followers of Jesus and the simplicity of their faith ('thou hast revealed them to babes') suggested the suitability of a passage describing the humility of Jesus himself and the simplicity of his demand. But there may be another cause. Many of the words or ideas of these last three verses are found in Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) li.* Now this begins in the Greek of the Septuagint with ἐξομολογήσομαι, meaning 'praise.' The Septuagint constantly uses this word to translate the Hebrew words for 'praise,' but in the Gospels and Acts this parallel passage of Matthew and Luke is its only appearance with this sense. Further, the Hebrew text of Sir. li. 1 reads, "I will praise Thee, *my God, my Father*." † It is important that before the time of Jesus, as far as I can trace it, the direct and vocative address to God as 'Father' is only found besides this place in Sir. xxiii. 1, 4 and III Macc. vi. 3 (?), 8.‡ It is not unnatural therefore

* 'Draw near to me' (23), 'rest' (27), 'put your neck under the yoke and let your soul receive instruction,' or, as the Hebrew has it, 'let your soul take up her [Wisdom's] burden' (26). The word for 'rest' occurs also in vi. 28 and 'gentle' and 'humble' are found in x. 14 f. (though more closely joined in Isa. xxvi. 6). The Hebrew of Jer vi. 16 may have given Jesus the whole phrase 'you shall find rest for your souls.'

† R. H. Charles does not accept this, preferring the agreement of Greek and Syriac, 'Jahveh, O King.'

‡ The last two instances may be due to the influence of Greek methods of addressing the gods, for the style of III. Macc. is much affected by Hellenistic thought. Jer. iii. 4 is probably corrupt, and in any case is not a vocative of prayer.

to suggest that the editor of Matthew, having before him a three-verse saying beginning "Come to me" which had several echoes of Sirach, felt that he could effectively append it to verses beginning with an ascription very like that of Sir. li. 1.

In the invitation itself there is nothing which might not come from a man deeply conscious of his sonship to God and filled with pity for the multitudes whose guides too often chafed their necks with the yoke of legalism. The tone is like some of the appeals of Wisdom or of Psalm xxxiv. 11:

> Come, children, hearken unto me,
> I will teach you the fear of the Lord,

with their promises for the meek and righteous.

But all this may have a bearing on the origin of the whole passage. It suggests that in both its forms it belongs to the praises of Wisdom. Von Hügel, who thinks it goes back to Jesus, writes of the passage as "unusually rich in echoes of the great Sapiential literature," and B. W. Bacon says that it

> follows the stereotyped form of such lyrics in which "Wisdom praises herself" as the means of human redemption. . . . The writer [of Q] places it in the mouth of Jesus because as supreme leader in the divinely given redemptive mission of Israel the Servant is "Wisdom" incarnate. (*Jesus and Paul.* Hodder and Stoughton. p. 186.)

Bacon links the saying with the well-known Wisdom passage in Luke xi. 49 (see pp. 108, 227) and treats the lament over Jerusalem (xiii. 34) in the same way.

This means that in the words about the Son and Father, the word "Wisdom" originally stood in place of "the Son." But did the Wisdom literature ever speak of God as the Father of Wisdom? In the absence of evidence for this, it is probably safer to regard the verse about the Father and the Son as a Christian *interpolation* in a Wisdom passage.

More important than these uncertainties is the fact that the last clause of the verse about Father and Son seems doubtful as theology. To confine knowledge of the Father to those "to whom the Son *chooses to give* the revelation" is surely contrary to all the purpose of Jesus, something indeed less than Christian. If Jesus said the words, he showed that he did not understand the Father's universal

love. For these reasons it is likely that the whole of this verse comes not from Jesus, but from a disciple.*

4. The remaining difficulty is in Matt. xviii. 20: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This again might well originate in the literature which personified Wisdom. The five verses preceding may be based on sayings of Jesus; the instruction to treat the recalcitrant member "as a Gentile and a publican" must be part of a very early, perhaps Palestinian, tradition; but the whole has been worked over—probably with simple unconsciousness that the transmitters were changing the tradition—in the interests of organization in the Church. If then we are at a stage where the wording is influenced by Church order, it may just as easily have been influenced by the Church's theology. We cannot be sure that Jesus said words with this exact shade of meaning.

There does not seem, then, to be a strong case for the belief that any of the sayings of Jesus went beyond the claims which might be made by a human Messiah looking forward to his exaltation as the servant of God to deliver and judge His people.

* Harnack (*Sayings of Jesus*, Excursus II) considered that the words "chooses to give" were "gives" in the original text of Luke and therefore of Q. This would remove much of the objection here stated. But the grounds he suggested are not convincing; see Easton, *Luke*.

X

Summary

The unique power of the teaching of Jesus to evolve its own stricter standards and to turn them in upon itself.

1. Was Christianity a new religion? Some Jewish legalism justified a complete breach, but Paul was often (though not always) unjust to the older faith. Jesus, however, in spite of his new revelation, drew continuously and gratefully upon the Old Testament.

2. The religion *of* Jesus and the religion *about* Jesus. B. W. Bacon's distinction in *The Story of Jesus* leads to an under-estimate of Jesus and his "paternalistic theism." Much similar teaching accepts the full rigours of historical criticism but still rests all religion on the Church's post-Resurrection experience of the Living Christ.

In *Jesus and Paul* Bacon gives the argument for this distinction. Yet the result is not the theology of the creeds, for it has no metaphysical basis and makes a leap from the human Jesus to the risen Christ. Bacon's reading of the life of Jesus as a first stage of prophetic teaching, failure in which led him on to try the second stage of Messianic leadership, and, after a second failure, a third stage as an atonement-offering and intercessor with God. This separates the risen Christ from the Jesus of the first two stages and leaves Jesus ignorant of the faith that was to be based upon him. This is not Incarnation but Apotheosis and retains its hold of humanity and divinity at the price of never allowing them to meet.

3. The orthodox theory requires a perfect revelation of God. This is obvious if it is to lead to worship. If Jesus shared even partially in the moral limitations of his time, his was not a perfect revelation. Nor could he have the universal relation to every human being which is the mark of deity.

Danger of making him God with a minus sign, and the consequent reaction into Tritheism.

4. Is God like man? Yes, but His unlikeness also fundamental. 'Divinity' often used to slur this over.

5. Orthodoxy does not give us a human Jesus. Not to have sinned is to be ignorant of the real pressure of temptation and to be outside the moral evolution in which men all share. God Incarnate cannot be also man.

6. God reveals Himself through men, a universal Christian principle. Fear of anthropomorphism needless. God is always partially incarnating Himself in men, and such lives have spiritual authority. Of this Jesus was the supreme example, but the higher measure of sonship in him does not put him into another *genus* from his fellows.

X

THE VALUES OF THE THEORY OF DIVINITY

(*a*) As a Theory is Orthodoxy Consistent with Itself?

Our scrutiny of the Biblical foundations of orthodox Christianity shows reason to doubt whether they are sufficient to bear the weight put upon them. In such a case we should expect to find cracks and subsidences in the building. Do we find them?

In other words can we be content with the coherence and self-consistency of the faith as it is summarized in the Creeds? Their distinctive element is that Jesus was God the Son, God incarnate in human flesh, and that between him and men there was an inescapable moral difference, a difference not in degree of likeness to God but a difference of absolute quality. As we have said, there is no need to examine the New Testament in detail to prove that the dominant section of the early Church actually held these views, or at least held and expressed ideas of Jesus and his work which logically developed into this fuller teaching. The formulation by the great Councils of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries was the natural result. But the intellectual perspective has been so changed by the advance in historical method that we are bound to think out once more and for our generation the difficulties created by so immense a claim as that of the Incarnation.

As we begin this task, let us yet again remember the unique power of Christian thought to evolve its own new and stricter standards of criticism and to turn these upon itself. This is one of the main reasons why Christianity is less tottery than some of its candid friends would like to think. It is not a building but a living organism, and like the human

body it has its own living machinery to consume and carry away the tissues which are superfluous and diseased. *Our impulse to criticize is a direct inheritance from Jesus.* When he said, "You have heard how it was said to our ancestors . . . but I say to you . . ." he laid down the principle that the traditions, rituals and documents which embody history —even the history of himself—must be subject to the more sensitive judgment of consciences trained to a closer walk with God. That we should alter and supersede the past may sometimes be the sign of a coarse insensibility to its truth and beauty, but quite as often it is the sign of life. Yet in theology we are slow to learn this lesson.

1. *Was Christianity a new religion?*

It has been already suggested that the New Testament does less than justice to the Old. One ground for this is plain enough. The Jewish scribes of that day paid too small regard to the more spiritual and therefore more universal element in the growing faith of their Scriptures. As these Scriptures were handled by the average Rabbi they were a hindrance to communion with God and to a progressive morality. The last few chapters of Klausner's *Jesus of Nazareth* are an instance of the way in which nationalist feeling can still cloud the judgment of fair and spiritually-minded Jews, dimming their eyes to the best that in lonely agony their own prophets have won for the human race. Towards a dispensation so frequently misinterpreted we must not be surprised if Paul was unjust. But that he was unjust, and unscholarly in his injustice, is beyond question. His breach with a mechanical interpretation of the Law allowed him to under-estimate the debt which the Christian revelation owed to what had gone before. In Gal. iii. 26, where he is addressing Christians of Jewish as well as Gentile origin, he says: "For you are all sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus." In other words it was their belief in Jesus which introduced them to sonship, and without it they could not have been sons of God. That is one expression of a general tendency of the apostle's writing. He makes

frequent use of proof texts from the Old Testament, but with rare exceptions he sees the earlier religious inheritance in the terms of the Law as expounded by the scribes, and, like the Rabbinic schools of the time, he ignores the lofty intuitions to which the prophets had attained. He is thus able to expound the revelation in Jesus as something unprecedented, opening up a relation to God which was previously impossible. He writes of the Holy Spirit as if men had first come under its influence with the advent of the Christian Gospel.

Paul was not always thus. When he was not preoccupied with his deliverance from Rabbinic legalism he had a historic sense which, within the limits of his age, was keen and sympathetic. But the limits of his age were close as prison bars. He had the preaching of the prophets at his finger-tips, but without reference to the context he treats their messages as aggregations of isolated verses. There was at that period no tradition of study or interpretation which could have emancipated him. For all Paul's originality in other directions, his handling of Scripture never came near to the originality of Jesus and he remained a Rabbi to the end. The main impression of his epistles is that which I have described above. The rest of the Church did not transcend his reading of previous revelation—how could they?—and were content to express their attitude by saying that "there is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved." They had their new position to conquer and to fortify. A doctrine of evolution, even if it could have had any meaning for themselves, would certainly have been far less effective as a fighting faith. From their point of view it was necessary for them to show that belief in this Messiah was indispensable, and this could only be, if it provided some new access to God, some secret of religion hitherto unknown.

A similar tendency is still dominant in orthodox and semi-orthodox apologetic. Theologians still labour to prove that the "uniqueness of Jesus" in life and teaching constitutes a figure so original that only incarnation by divine interposition can account for it. It is almost impossible to

maintain this and do complete justice to Judaism. Many of us know from experience the subtle disinclination to admit that certain of the deeper intuitions of the older dispensation were identical with important parts of the message of Jesus. The same necessity prejudices us against the finer thought of other religions. And so we evade the problem created by the existence of genuine and redemptive communion with God outside the range of the faith which claims that it alone can make that communion available.

Yet a little reflection will convince anyone but Aristotle's "mere defender of a case" that the saints of the Old Testament did reach a communion which was genuine and redemptive. It would be absurd to deny that they received and were filled by the Holy Spirit. When we put the question, "Did the prophets find God?" it is sufficient to think of Hosea and the author or authors of the Second Isaiah. It would be artificial to make a distinction of quality between the Greek Christian's experience of the free gift of grace by the one man Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 15) and that of the writer of the twenty-third Psalm. No doubt these Hebrews found God intermittently, imperfectly, but so do those who according to the teaching of the Church enjoy the indispensable mediation of Christ.

Now the total effect of the representation of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels is unlike that offered by the Church. Like most prophets he brought a new message. His consciousness of sonship made him and others certain that he had a secret to impart which men did not know, even if they might have discovered it hidden away in the rolls of prophecy. His predecessors caught glimpses of truth like men who see patches of blue sky through the driving clouds; he saw the open firmament. His sweep embraced all the fragments they had contributed and a hundred times more, for it joined their spasmodic guesses in a living, organic unity of faith. The simplicity of his moral intuitions convinced him that his new wine could not be conveyed in the old cracking bottles of current religion. From quite early in the ministry he seems to have been assured that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and when he came to

believe that he was the Messiah, he could speak with an authority that had no human derivation. By the inherent necessities of his mission he was original. And yet he never gives the impression of breaking with or undervaluing the religious past. His estimate of the Scriptures is unlike that of Paul. Freely as he can criticize, Jesus never disowns the preceding dispensation as Paul does, and being free of this negative preoccupation, he is able to do justice to the prophets. To their best paragraphs the whole temper of the Synoptic Gospels has a marked likeness. As was said above, Jesus drew continually upon the more universal teaching of the Old Testament. Without allowing for that debt it is impossible for the modern mind to form any credible scheme of his development. To-day theologians accept this without question, and only those will challenge it who insist that from babyhood Jesus sprang straight into the full confidence and power of the Son of God. But if Jesus owed so much to the higher evolution of the religion of his race, it is surely arbitrary to treat the faith on which he fed his soul and the faith which he transmitted as two different religions.

Jesus taught that all men were the sons of God, though for the most part his upbringing may have limited his reference to the children of Abraham. There is little in the Synoptics to show that he thought a faith in his divinity necessary for that sonship, that he thought with Paul that men only became sons after his advent, or that—in the words of John vii. 39 which Paul would have echoed—"as yet there was no Spirit, for Jesus was not yet glorified." The idea that Christianity involved a relation with God of a quality radically new and previously out of human reach, appears to derive from Paul, or from someone in the early Church before Paul whom we cannot identify.

The old justification for this arbitrary severance from the spiritual experience of Jewish saints was that Jesus "abrogated" the former dispensation. (It is curious that those who hold this are often enthusiasts for the doctrine of verbal inspiration of the Bible "from cover to cover.") Men may abrogate a law for one of two reasons. First, because, while

still in agreement with its main purpose, they no longer approve some of its clauses, or, second, because they disapprove its purpose. In the first case they cling to that purpose and strive to give effect to it in some new way; in the second case they repudiate the law,—lock, stock and barrel. Only in the former sense can we say that Jesus abrogated the Law or the Old Testament, in the sense in which a closer always abrogates a less close approximation to the truth. He said he would destroy the Temple, but would build another more worthy in its place. For Jesus there was much in the Old Testament which needed correction, but there was also much which he carried over, illustrated and emphasized, much to which he appealed against the verbal embroideries of the scribes, much that he made a vital part of his teaching. The religion Jesus preached was not so disconnected with anything before it that it required God to come from heaven for its inauguration.

2. *The religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus*

At this point theologians introduce the related argument that while this may apply to the *religion of Jesus*, true Christianity is, as Paul would have said, the *religion about Jesus*. B. W. Bacon has expressed this strongly in the beginning of his book, *The Story of Jesus* (G. Allen & Unwin). It is worth while to quote:

> The difference between Pauline and Matthæan Christianity has been very clearly defined for us in a great lecture . . . from Harnack. . . . It was called "The Religion *of* Jesus and the Religion *about* Jesus." The religion *of* Jesus, is, of course, the substance of the Gospel of Matthew. Someone has defined it as the paternalistic theism of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. That, I suppose, is the nearest definition historical criticism can give with united voice of the "central verities" which Dr. Van Dyke would establish on the simple authority of Jesus. That is the religion *of* Jesus. The religion *about* Jesus is an apostolic testimony to which we have direct and

historically certain access only through the writings of Paul. As Paul phrases it, it is the message that through the life and more especially the martyr death and continuing Holy Spirit of Jesus, *God* has been restoring the world to His favour, forgiving men their sins (p. 9 f.).

Now it is quite obvious that the Pauline religion *about* Jesus cannot get along without the religion *of* Jesus and would not desire to (p. 11).

In point of historical fact nobody in Jesus' time accused him of attempting to found a new religion. Least of all did he so regard his own work. He wanted to bring his fellow-Jews back to the religion of their fathers. What, then, did make Christianity a new religion? The act of God. As Paul very clearly saw, both before and after his conversion, the cross and resurrection made the difference. Christians taught that God had given his Son. *God* raised him from the dead. The sacred life was a manifestation of *God*. It brought a new conception of God's relation to man and man's to God. That was the new factor. That was the disturbing element which made Christianity a new religion (p. 18).

It is Paul who made Christianity a religion of the Spirit (p. 9).

I will admit, then, that we should give most earnest heed to the earthly life of Jesus. We cannot do too much for ascertaining the Mind of Christ on every question of faith and practice; for without this anchor in a living historic personality, our religion would evaporate in vague speculations like those of the Docetic Gnostics in the age after Paul.

But the very reason we study the life of the historical Jesus is because of what we know from past and present experience *about* the eternal Christ (p. 20).

The first impression of these paragraphs is that one or two of the phrases about Jesus are incautious. Bacon has allowed his annoyance with the liberal theologians to infect his references to Jesus. The second impression is that, if

this is Paulinism, which for Bacon means Christianity, Paulinism is compact of elements inherently antagonistic and self-contradictory. Bacon is a distinguished scholar and he knows that criticism has made it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain that the religion which Jesus appears to have believed and taught—the religion *of* Jesus—offers sufficient foundation for the doctrine of the Church—the religion *about* Jesus. He is driven, therefore, to choose between them, and on the basis of an interpretation of his own religious experience he chooses the second. The result is that he belittles the figure of Jesus as men knew him in Palestine. He admits that we should give most earnest heed to it, for it will guard us against the Gnosticism which treats Christ as a divine spirit visiting the earth for purposes of demonstration. The living historic personality of Jesus is an "anchor," but plainly it is not the ship. It is again something without which "the Pauline religion about Jesus cannot get along." At the end one asks: Is that all?

The whole tone of Bacon's argument should warn us against defending the creeds by a sharp distinction between (*a*) the religion which we can attribute to Jesus before his death and resurrection, a religion supposed to be less than the redeeming Christianity of the creeds—indeed, if we are to believe Bacon, comparatively unimportant for faith—and (*b*) the religion revealed to the disciples after the death and resurrection. This second religion does not appear to have been revealed to Jesus himself. "Nobody in Jesus' time accused him of attempting to found a new religion. Least of all did he so regard his own work." The difference between the old dispensation and the new is not in Jesus' character or in any revelation of God which he brought to men, but in an act of God. Humorists have said that at a wedding the one person who does not matter is the bridegroom, though you must have him there. On Bacon's theory Jesus the man matters very little, but theology must have him there.

It is not only Bacon who would disparage the "paternalistic theism" of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer, in favour of a religion created after the death of Jesus

by an act of God. The same tendency is common in dogmatic Christianity. But let us recall that Sermon for a moment and that Prayer. They do not contain all the teaching of Jesus, perhaps not even the core of his teaching, —that indeed he gave in life as much as in word,—but they are essential elements. Much of the remaining teaching in the Synoptics—the story of the Prodigal Son, for example, —would fall into the category of "paternalistic theism." Jesus taught and encouraged—there is no doubt of it—a direct relation to the Father, such as he preached in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere. Can we believe that this was fundamentally insufficient and that after his death an act of God was needed to introduce the idea of his mediation? When Jesus said "Hallowed be Thy name," he did not put his own name alongside that of the Father, and when he bade his disciples pray "Thy kingdom come," he made no reference to the kingship which the early Church attributed to himself. But was the prayer inadequate because of this omission?

Of this general tendency to disparage the teaching *of* Jesus Bacon's is an extreme instance. But it is a useful hint of the fallacy in the argument put forward so frequently by teachers with more instinct for theological self-protection than Bacon, and less knowledge of New Testament criticism, that essential Christianity is unaffected by any of the conclusions of historical research upon the Gospels, since Christianity is founded upon the Church's post-Resurrection experience of "the living Christ." Subconsciously and yet inevitably those who press that argument will come to feel that Jesus as criticism reveals him is a more or less inconvenient figure.

In a previous book of peculiar freshness and interest, *Jesus and Paul*, Bacon has shown the process of historic interpretation which leads up to the quotations just given. For our purpose this process is important. Bacon's value is that his rare mastery of the New Testament text and of the work done upon it during the last fifty years compels him to face the New Testament evidence and offer an explanation of its main problem. As a scholar he refuses to

ride off on the generalities about the impression made upon us by the story of Jesus which so many writers on New Testament theology seem to regard as a substitute for a scrutiny of the facts. But at the end he bases Christian faith in the religion *about* Jesus which we find in Paul. It would therefore be hard to pitch upon a more useful example of the typical modernist attempt to combine a whole-hearted acceptance of the results of Gospel criticism with an equal insistence on the validity of the Church's faith in the risen Jesus. This admits that the earlier sources, as we can distinguish them beneath the editing of the first three Gospels, provide little trustworthy evidence for the theology of Christ the Lord and in the main revere Jesus as a prophet with a mysterious overplus of personal and spiritual power. It then goes on to derive a qualified justification for the Church's theology from the authority of the risen Christ. It founds everything upon the inspiration and intensification of religion produced by contact with Christ risen from the dead and kindling faith by his presence. The theory recalls the tendency of one or two texts in the New Testament to regard the lordship of Jesus as won by his death and conferred or inaugurated by his resurrection.*

Note first that this only gives a qualified justification for the Creeds. The Church states that in the inherent nature of the universe Jesus was God the Son. (This argument from the inherent nature of the universe is what is meant by that awkward word 'metaphysical.') The Church reinforces this by the doctrine of his pre-existence and of his activity in the creation of the worlds. If we are to worship Jesus as God, we shall be compelled to ascribe to him a unique connection with the scheme of reality. But these modernists do not go so far; indeed they usually deprecate the attempt to define Jesus in this way. Probably the data they admit will not support any such definition. Their thought moves in the ethical and spiritual impression of Jesus on our minds, and this, they believe, naturally carries us on to worship him as God. The theory is like Ritschl's explanation that we make a 'judgment of value' about Jesus, by which we

* See p. 141, with Rom. i. 4.

find that Jesus has for us the value and authority of God. Like Ritschl these modernists leave the problem hanging in the air. For worship implies more than that. Is it possible to teach the worship of Jesus as God without taking another step and relating him to the inherent nature of things? That God is personal does not justify us in forgetting that He is also the ultimate Reality, upholding the universe. Can we say of Jesus of Nazareth that he too is that ultimate Reality? If not, what do we mean when we worship him as God?

Further, this modernist theology seems to involve a significant gap separating the human Jesus of the Gospel origins (still human even if we allow for the overplus of personal sanctity and power) from the risen Christ who has the value of God. In popular apologetic it is easy to conceal this gap, since Christians, even those of a critical turn of mind, naturally desire to find confirmation for the central Christian doctrine without being untrue to historical evidence. Mass suggestion is strong enough to disguise the fact that the leap from the human leader to the Lord of worship is remarkable alike for its distance and its suddenness.

In *Jesus and Paul* Bacon treats Jesus' life on earth as three stages, during the first two of which Jesus set a definite object before himself and, when each original aim was frustrated, drove on (or was driven on) to a new expression of it, which by this compulsory development became more than a new expression, became indeed a transfigured aim.

As prophet and teacher Jesus began by attempting to carry the Baptist's work to its completion.

> He sets out to gather the lost sheep of Israel and by his message of repentance and faith to make ready for Jehovah a people prepared for Him. Certainly it was, as Meyer says, a "religion of the heart," a message of pure religion and undefiled before God the Father, the consummation of all that the law and the prophets had taught. The parable of the Prodigal Son embodies it. But it did not win Israel (*Jesus and Paul.* Hodder & Stoughton, p. 36).

It is of this initial Galilean stage that Bacon writes :—

> What might have come if Jesus' challenge to the religious control of the Synagogue leaders in Galilee had been successful is difficult to estimate. Actually, if he proposed to continue his work for the reign of God, he had now only the choice of going to the Gentiles and teaching them, or of renewing the struggle for the leadership among his own people at Jerusalem (p. 40).
>
> [From the outset] his one effort had been to prepare for the reign of God by bringing Israel through repentance and faith into "reconciliation" with its Father in Heaven. As prophet and teacher in Galilee he had failed (p. 45).

In the second stage, therefore, Jesus "renewed the struggle for the leadership" by putting himself at the head of a Messianic movement.

> Driven out from Galilee Jesus took up a larger undertaking . . . And with it we see his message assuming a new form . . . of individual life through death . . . his own person becomes more central (p. 36).
>
> Out of defeat he snatched victory. He made the cause national by his appeal as Son of David and Son of Man in Jerusalem (p. 45).

As Messiah he went up to Jerusalem and for a few hopeful days it looked as if he might succeed in wresting the mastery of Jewish religion out of the hands of "the Sadducean hierocracy, the half-religious, half-political control of the priesthood in the temple." But in that aim he was defeated. Obviously Bacon must ask here : "Suppose he had succeeded ?" With characteristic frankness he answers : Then "the Gospel would have remained primarily the affair of the Jewish people."

In both the first two stages Jesus had failed, in one as prophet and teacher, in the other as Messianic leader.

> There was one thing more he could do. . . . He could dedicate his body and blood as an atonement-offering

> for the forgiveness of sin, that God might be reconciled to his people.

His words in the Lord's Supper are "the utterance of the dedicated priest and intercessor with God."

Thereafter through his Cross and Resurrection "the act of God . . . made Christianity a new religion." *

All this is an interesting construction of the life of Jesus as a prophet, a human messenger of God, turning this way and then that to discover the message that he must give. I do not myself think that we can make so sharp a distinction between the first and second stages—the thought of the Kingdom was always near to that of the Messiah—or between the second and third—long before the failure in Jerusalem Jesus' interpretation of Messiahship contained the thought of suffering as an intercessor for the people. But we may readily admit that there was growth in Jesus' conception of his mission, and that some of this was stimulated by failure.

Yet I cannot connect this reading of the Synoptic evidence with the idea that Jesus was Son of God and a perfect revelation of the Father. Apparently, if Jesus had succeeded as a prophet we should have missed the Christian message of redemption, while if later he had established his position as Messiah, the Gospel "would have remained primarily the affair of the Jewish people." It seems a paradox that those who rejected the preaching of Jesus and those others who abandoned him in Jerusalem were really doing more to ensure that the world received the whole Gospel than those who listened and obeyed. It seems a paradox that the Son of God should be working out the message of salvation for men by the method of trial and error. In explicit terms Bacon teaches that the message of pure religion and undefiled before the Father, of reconciliation with Him through repentance and faith, the message of the parable of the Prodigal Son, was no sufficient basis for the Christian hope of salvation. That hope, he explains, could only be secured when at the death of Jesus the act of God

* See p. 255.

supervened to raise him from the dead and set him on high. Not till then did repentance and faith become operative.

This preserves the main conclusions of orthodoxy, but surely by dangerous means. On many it will make the impression that the Son of God, come to reveal the Father, was for most of his public ministry preaching an inadequate evangel. On Bacon's showing he cannot have known that the act of God sealing his sacrifice was also the seal without which no repentance or faith could be valid and complete, or he would have preached that from the outset, as the Fourth Gospel represents. If Bacon is right, during the two earlier periods you could not safely have gone to Jesus to ask the way of eternal life. Bacon is logical enough to state, as we have seen, that " nobody in Jesus' time accused him of attempting to found a new religion. Least of all did he so regard his own work." It seems that Jesus was destined to be the centre of a Gospel which till the very end he himself did not know and therefore could not preach. We can no longer say that Jesus is our authority. For instance :

> It cannot of course be claimed that this mystical doctrine of transfiguration by conformation to the likeness of the glorified Lord is part of the teaching of Jesus. . . . This is not part of what Jesus taught in Galilee; but it is emphatically part of the original gospel; for it is the very reflection of Paul's own vision of the risen Christ. . . . It is the very essence of Paul's message that he not only has it from the Lord himself that Jesus dedicated his body and blood for our reconciliation to the Father, but that he can also testify of his own knowledge that God accepted the sacrifice (p. 106).

This would appear to make the witness of Paul, subjective though it was bound to be, more important than that of the Master himself. This is indeed the glorification of the Gospel *about* Jesus at the expense of the Gospel *of* Jesus !

Nor is Jesus " the Word made flesh," for Bacon writes of the construction of the Gospel of Mark :

> . . . it is of course impossible for him to make it at the same time the story of a real man under real historical conditions and also the story of the superhuman being who steps down from the "Heavenly places" of the post-resurrection Christology (p. 138).

Here we have a doctrine, not of Incarnation but of Apotheosis, not a life in Galilee at once divine and human, but the creation of divinity at a later point by the act of God. For that act of apotheosis I do not think the interpretation of the Epistles or Christian experience, ancient and modern, is sufficient evidence and guarantee. If in this and similar theories we are to separate the quality of Jesus in his earthly history from that of the risen and redeeming Christ, can we still regard the two figures as identical, and can we say that Christ was man as well as God? Are we to infer that he was human before death and divine after it? If so, the two natures never met. Orthodoxy finds it hard to fuse the two natures in its thought. This theory seems to secure the semblance of orthodoxy by abandoning the attempt.

On the other hand, those who reject the doctrine of two natures as psychologically obsolete are still in difficulties. By what development is the human Jesus—making no claim to worship, as criticism shows him—to become the Christ who claims our worship by inherent right?

Efforts to prove that Christianity is unaffected by the results of criticism *because it rests upon something which happened after the closing of the earthly ministry of Jesus*, will produce a cleavage, more or less extended and decisive, between the Christ of the Church and the Jesus of Palestine. To the extent of that cleavage Christianity will cease to be founded upon Jesus.

3. *The orthodox theory falls to the ground if it cannot point to a perfect revelation of God*

For the most part we do not remember how much is involved in the doctrine that Jesus was God the Son. We have accepted the fact of the Incarnation as it was taught us, and, when questions arose, we have lulled them to sleep with

this acceptance. In the *Modern Churchman* of December 1926, H. H. Farmer provided a useful criterion :

> Whatever else we may mean by the divinity of Jesus, we at least mean that we accord to Him an attitude of mind and spirit which is appropriate to a man's relation to God and not to his relation to anybody else.

If we are to accord that worship, the speech and act which embody the revelation must not fall below God's level. The essence of an incarnation is that it reveals the mind and nature of God, not necessarily in completeness, but perfectly as far as it goes. On the theory of two natures in Jesus, a human and a divine, while the human must be fully human, the divine must be unchallengeably divine. The same applies to any more psychological explanation of the Person of Christ *which leads to worship*. Modernist theologians lay thoughtful emphasis on the humanity of Jesus, but, as regards his recorded life, they rarely work out with corresponding thoroughness what they understand by his divinity. Indeed on this point some do not travel beyond asseveration, while others seek to commend their theory by ambiguous phrases such as ' like God ' or ' at the heart of the universe there is a love like Christ's.' Yet the crux is on this side of the problem. We can conceive that the length and breadth of the divine power might be veiled from our purblind vision, accustomed to the cave and untrained for the sunlight, but we cannot be satisfied with a theory of the Incarnation in which the mingling of the divine with the human means that the divine is lowered or put into an undivine position.

Chapter V showed cause for feeling that in thought and speech Jesus was influenced by the partisanships and prejudices of his time. If that is true, we cannot " accord to him an attitude of mind and spirit which is appropriate to a man's relation to God and not to his relation to anybody else." He would not himself have wished it.

I do not forget that some believers in the Creeds find certain indications of human weakness in Jesus possible on their theory, and even plausible, because they are consistent

with the "humility of God." The conception of God's humility is one of the unique contributions of Judaism * and Christianity to the world's religion. That He can reveal Himself through limited human lives, that He is not ashamed to be called their God, is a conception daring, wonderful and worthy of much meditation, one of the reasons to adore the Father whose foolishness is wiser than the wisdom of men. But this does not explain how, when God became incarnate, He should lose something of the divine quality. If He is incarnate and therefore worshipful, the human personality must make no difference to His moral supremacy as God. Yet obviously prejudices and partisanships, however natural, do make a difference. He who has them cannot be divine.

Quite apart from the instances quoted in Chapter V, the requirement that an incarnation should not fall below the perfect revelation of God raises further questions. The story of the Syro-Phenician woman is one of several indications that Jesus was avoiding the pressure to give physical healing. On what principle can God single out one for healing and leave many others unhealed? We believe that God, whether He heals or not, is in a relation of blessing to every man. Yet Jesus evaded many who were in need. If Jesus was God, the evasion is hard to justify, and no theory of a self-emptying incarnation will explain it. If, however, he was man and not God, it was inevitable that he should restrict himself. This point is mainly valuable as an illustration of the difficulty underlying the whole theory of human limitation which is necessarily involved in a doctrine of incarnation. At stages in the previous chapters the more orthodox modernist will have said to himself, "This man is ignoring the fact that incarnation involves limitation. If Jesus was to be man at all, he could not escape the limitations of humanity." With the last sentence, of course, I agree, but I cannot but ask, "Having these limitations, could Jesus really be God or have the value of God?" What the modernist makes of those passages which seem to imply a limitation that is indubitably moral I am not here concerned

* See Jonah iii. and iv. with Isaiah xliii. 23 f. G. F. Moore, *Judaism*, i. 440 f.

to ask. Here I am concerned with the doubt whether a man with limitation of any sort can give a perfect revelation of the universal Father, so perfect, that is to say, that we can worship both interchangeably. For God's universality is not something more or less abstract and inferential, like omniscience or omnipotence, which, important as they are, are not of primary importance for faith. It is the declaration and guarantee of His relation of fatherly love with each of His creatures. To a human personality how are such relations possible? Or, to put the same perplexity in another form—if, while still on earth, Jesus continued or entered into those universal relations (a theory which the Gospel evidence seems to contradict), can his experience have been human and can it offer any example for us?

It is owing to doubts like those I have tried to express in this section that the stricter theologians hesitate to describe Jesus as God without qualification. They tell us that the phrase of Faber's hymn, "Jesus is God," is illegitimate and that the Scriptures and the creeds only entitle us to say "God the Son." But the distinction seems inevitably to represent Jesus as God with a minus sign.

And—for worship at least—God with a minus sign is sheer impossibility. That is why, when the theologians' backs are turned, official, and still more popular, Christology always tends to slip away into a one-sided emphasis of the deity of Christ. We recall the words of von Hügel, quoted at greater length on p. 102:

> The Chalcedonian formula has, upon the whole, been more satisfactorily attended to as regards the Divine Nature than as regards the Human Nature, and limitations, obscurities, weaknesses, growths, temptations, which are interwoven with human nature as such, have been, for the most part, too much ignored or explained away, even though they stand on clear record in the Synoptic Gospels.

Miall Edwards, who attempts to frame a Christology in modern terms based on personality as the self-conscious subject of experience, has the following:

> The orthodox dogma of the Trinity . . . is ever in a state of unstable equilibrium between the heresies of Tritheism on the one hand and of Sabellianism on the other. It seeks to combine the advantage of both without being committed to the error of either. But in fact orthodoxy more or less unconsciously gravitates, now toward the one, now toward the other, according to the exigencies of the moment. When the desire to safeguard the *unity* of God (while still retaining Christ's divinity) is uppermost, the tendency is towards Sabellianism. When the dominant interest is in the distinctive personality of Christ and in the plurality of "persons" in the Godhead, the tendency is towards di- or tri-theism.*

When, on the other hand, we lay the stress on the humanity which the Creeds also demand, we enter on a course of dangerous adjustment. Most of those whose thought is influenced by the century in which we live have adjusted far more than they realize. The compromise which allows many modernists to keep one foot in orthodoxy by worshipping Christ risen, while they accept all the criticism which seems to present Jesus as a purely human figure, is not likely to stand for long. We are driven to ask whether there is any alternative between a view which treats Jesus as unambiguously human and one of the succession of heresies which made him God without being genuinely man. The unstable balance of the Creeds almost inevitably leads those who accept the evidence of his human limitation to regard him as God with a minus sign.

4. *Is God like man?*

A current suggestion, more popular ten years ago than to-day, is that we can overcome these difficulties if we recognize that God is like man. The fact is, of course, that God is like and also unlike, and that we have no right to

* *Lord of Life*, p. 216 (S.C.M.). On p. 214 Miall Edwards defines Sabellianism as the doctrine which identifies Christ personally with God the Creator or the Ultimate Reality.

ignore either word. 'Like' certainly, for He reveals Himself in men and women,—we know no better name for Him than Father—but 'unlike' in that He is infinitely superior to the best human character. As theology would say, He is transcendent. The unlikeness, indeed, is profoundly important. The best of us cannot do without redemption, and even if we state our unworthiness in evolutionary terms, that only shows up the divergence more clearly, for it reminds us that the very conception of goodness we possess is an imperfect, half-developed thing, upon which after a thousand years our descendants will look with pity.

I do not want a God like myself. I have friends like myself but better, and I owe them much. But from God I need something utterly different. Unless God, in spite of the humility of His condescension and the immanence of His indwelling, is yet far above me, faith loses its value. God is a meaningless term unless He is "completely other" than the holiest man. We say there is divinity in man, and that is nothing more than truth, though the phrase is a loose one and allows of deceptive ambiguities; but we may not use it to slur over the essential difference between God and us. There lies the reason against the easy compromise of applying the title of "divine" to Jesus, on the ground that there is "divinity" in all men. The word takes us back to creeds in which many of us do not believe, and evades the definition of the Person of Christ for which the modern mind is calling. Had Jesus the transcendent and universal quality which is inseparable from our thought of God? Those who answer 'Yes' will have to explain how he could be the first-born of many human brethren.

5. *Orthodoxy does not give us a human Jesus*

Just as the theory of incarnation gives us a God who is less than God, so it gives us a man who is less than man. It is not sufficient to meet this by Biblical assertions that he was tempted in all points like as we are or by the derived assertions of the Creeds that he was perfect man.

The theory of sinlessness in whatever form destroys the

likeness of humanity. One who has never sinned cannot be human. He who has never sinned cannot know the meaning of temptation. For us men temptation finds its main ally in the fact that we have already fallen. The soul that has never yielded has succeeded in creating an immunity which lifts it above all likeness to the rest. The difficulty is one which young people feel keenly, and we have no right to brush it aside as the sentimentalism of youth, or to fail to learn its lesson. If Jesus, by endowment or attainment, was invariably proof against the subtlest spiritual temptations and invariably obedient to the highest spiritual demands, we cannot think of him as "brother-man." To be sinless cuts him off from humanity as much as would any miraculous birth.*

The objection may be stated with deeper force. Sin is not only a matter of the operation of our will in act or neglect, in imagination or disposition, it is also the registration of our evolutionary grade. This applies to the individual not less than to society. There is always a mist-swept "No man's land" of moral advance which we have not conquered. For that territory we cannot be responsible in the same measure as for the ground within our lines, and yet we cannot disclaim responsibility. Our main business as fighters for morality is to occupy that disputed space. But when we have made it ours, "No man's land" again stretches out beyond it. All moral and spiritual evolution

* We may note the unrealities to which the doctrine of incarnation drives some orthodox writers. R. A. Knox in *The Faith of Catholics* (Ernest Benn) writes that Jesus "paraded his Humanity" and even this :—

> . . . his Agony in the garden of Gethsemani shows once more the intention to parade (you might almost say) his human weakness. He insisted on having witnesses at hand precisely when any of us who had the normal instincts of courage would have wished to be alone—when he knew that he was going to "break down." I have never been able to make any sense of these two stories [this and the Temptation] except on the assumption that our Lord meant to say, "See, I am Man, though I am God," and in issuing that caution, it is clear that, *ex hypothesi*, he admits the fact of his own Divinity. (P. 107.)

Such thoughts seem to deny anything like normal humanity. The life of Jesus becomes once more the play-acting of the old Docetic heresy. But is not that inherent in much orthodox Christology?

depends upon our power to use each step forward as a starting-point for further progress. Each attainment brings a new sensitiveness to higher standards which makes our conscience uneasy till we raise our standard higher still. It is here that we have to deal with sin in its subtlest form. It is this which oftenest gives us cause to confess, "We have left undone the things that we ought to have done." We have "come short of the glory of God." It will take more generations than we can imagine to produce a perfect man. In so far, then, as we claim perfection for Jesus, we exempt him from the operation of this law and lift him outside the evolutionary process in which all men, individually and collectively, move stumbling on their upward way. If he was God incarnate in the flesh, it is impossible that he should be truly man.*

6. *God reveals Himself through man*

We have said that God was unlike man. Yet it is gloriously true that He is also like man. That likeness is indicated by the fact that He can reveal Himself through man. With all its inconsistencies the doctrine of divinity enshrines a truth beyond price. This is one of the sharpest divisions between Christianity and what we might call the philosophic religions, *i.e.* those in which theologians reach their definition of religion along the lines of philosophy and logic. It is one of the fundamental contributions Christianity has to make to world religion.

Ever and again I have noticed that I received the greatest inspiration from the sight of human goodness and heroism and that religion never meant so much to me as when I saw a friend reach a startling height of goodness or show a devotion, at once rare and characteristic, to some splendid cause. I think of a man accepting with gay bravery the doctor's sentence of death, the statement by a candidate for ordination to the Mission field of the way God had called

* See B. W. Bacon quoted pp. 262 f. The same feeling that Jesus cannot be described as man leads Paul in two important passages to say, not that Jesus came as man, but that God sent him "*in the likeness of* sinful flesh," and again that he entered into "*the likeness of* men" (Rom. viii. 3, Phil. ii. 7).

him, or the retrospect of some veteran of the faith. At such times my mouth has been filled with laughter and my tongue with singing. Few things have made me so inclined to praise and pray. Some years ago I was afraid of this, for it seemed to prove that I was incapable of response to the higher spiritual appeal, unable as it were to worship God in an absolute and unmediated communion. I see now that my instinct was right and that there was nothing to fear, but all to welcome. It was God speaking through the goodness of men, and it is by this means that He has always given an essential part of His revelation. We draw our main revelation of God from men, and to us in our turn is committed the high honour of revealing Him to others.

The teaching of Jesus is based everywhere on this principle, notably in the parables. But this finds its clearest proof in his use of the word "Father" to irradiate the idea of God. He takes a word of common human life, describing men who are crude, impatient and fallible, and he says to the ages: That is the best, the most illuminating name for God. The more we ponder over it, the more of wonder shall we find in the idea.

Some make objection that this is anthropomorphism, that we are picturing God in our own likeness. The objection is not so impressive as it was. Recent writers have drawn its sting by admitting it and by showing that the ethical and spiritual elements of human nature are exactly those which are essential to the conception of a personal God.* Personality, even in its fallible human immaturity, is moral in a degree that is impossible to attribute to impersonal abstractions upon the icy heights of thought. The morality of men and women is of higher quality than logical truth, and, though never incompatible with logical truth, it gives us a more profound revelation. In spite of the difficulties inherent in any attempt to represent Him, we are justified in conceiving the God we have not seen by means of the noblest characteristics of men. Jesus took anthropomorphism and made it sublime.

The sensitive mind will notice many an indication that

* See for one, Streeter, *Reality*.

God is continually revealing Himself through human personality. Men said of Erskine of Linlathen that they could not think of him and the thought of God be far away. On the opposite page of the book to which I owe this reference, Gossip's *In Christ's Stead*, there is an illustration as striking. Gossip names a man to whom he was once assistant, Alexander Cumming of Forfar, and goes on :

> So he passed to and fro, a kind of benediction to us all. . . . I well remember how one of the chief men in the place, strong, self-reliant, and with many admirable qualities, but not one whom you would have thought could be easily touched, looked after him one day. " Often I pull myself together with this thought," he said, " that if I threw away my life, I think that I could bear my punishment without whining, but . . . but . . . I could not face the pain in Mr. Cumming's eyes." (P. 80. Hodder & Stoughton.)

Or there is Mrs. Fawcett's quotation of a reference by E. A. Beck of Trinity Hall to James Stuart of Trinity, Cambridge, first Professor of Mechanics and Engineering (the title of the professorship gives a fine tang to the quotation) :

> " I don't know Stuart, I wish I did, but I know that when Middlemore comes back from seeing him, he looks as if he had taken the Sacrament." (*What I remember*, p. 76.)

Again, Stanley Jones tells this story, most remarkable to anyone who has watched the persistent Indian hesitation to allow to God any attribute of personal affection :

> A friend of mine went into a shoe shop and found the Hindu shopkeeper in deep distress. He had lost his only son. My friend to comfort him said, " Well, my brother, remember in your trouble that God is love." The Hindu's face brightened up and he said, " Yes, I know that God is love." My friend, interested at his evident eagerness, asked, " How do you know that God is love ? " " Oh," said the Hindu, " I worked for Foy

sahib in Cawnpore, and no one could work for Foy sahib and not know God is love." (*Christ of the Indian Road.* Hodder & Stoughton.)

Remember too that men found themselves praying to Henry Drummond after he died.*

Those instances are unusually clear and decisive and yet there is the same power, and always has been, in the men who walk with God. Many of us are blest with friends of just such an influence, and in their strength we go through desert places. Of this divine revelation Jesus was the supreme example. His faith in God was so certain, his communion so pure and proof against interruption, his love so like the love of God, his self-sacrifice so determined in one so sensitive, that he brought men right into the presence of God, and on and on for unfolding generations his story repeats the miracle. There is no other revelation to set alongside his for completeness, beauty and thrill of inspiration. A human Jesus can still be an "incarnation" of God, though we may feel no longer able to use the word in its traditional and technical meaning. He glorified manhood and showed what by God's grace is open to men. It is a great message that man reveals God, a message to which, as we shall see later, no other faith can provide a worthy parallel. It is a message of peculiar attractiveness, and if preached as it deserves, a message of power.

But this is not a proof that Jesus was divine in the sense that he began with, or at any intermediate stage received, an endowment not available for men. Nor is it a justification for treating the human revelations of God before and after him as of another genus than his. Indeed, if Jesus is the supreme example of the revelation of God in man, it is surely necessary that he should be human without qualification.

This applies as aptly to the "authority" which the life and story of Jesus exercise upon us. I have already discussed the way in which the Church identifies our experiences of divine communion with "the living Christ," and have

* See note, p. 183.

attempted to show that, when examined, the identification is not convincing.* By authority I do not mean something resting upon such a theory. Here I have in mind the impact which the memory of Jesus makes upon all Christian souls, its proved power to stimulate belief in the reality which we call divine, and to inspire action on a level we could not otherwise attain. If we cast our net wide enough we shall see that in varying degrees all men whom we can regard as revealers of God have that same authority. A revelation of God which carried no authority would be a contradiction in terms. Every Christian man believes more and acts better because of men and women he is privileged to know. The lives of Wesley, George Fox and Luther have "authority" for millions to-day. The most striking instance is that little brother of the Master, Francis of Assisi, standing like a middle pier to support the bridge of Christian faith across the centuries. Because Francis lived, there are thousands for whom it is easier to believe in God. Because of Francis men do actions which but for him they would not have done and obey vocations which they would once have found too high. The friend who gave me Sabatier's *Francois d'Assise* altered my life. So did the other who, at a parting of the ways, sent me George Adam Smith's biography of Henry Drummond. All the sons of God have authority, and, the more intimate their sonship, the more compelling is their authority. By the beauty of his nature and because he learned obedience from the things he suffered, Jesus had the highest that we know or are likely to know; but it was not an authority of an exclusive type. In this, as in the whole range of his conquest, he was the first-born of many brethren. It is the glory he himself would have chosen.

* Pp. 206 ff.

XI

Summary

Unsatisfactoriness of terms for the divisions of the Trinity, produced by the attempt to avoid the ideas of (1) separate personalities and (2) mere aspects of Deity.

Many prayers are directly addressed to Christ as a separate person, seeming to make him a second God.

Paul gives no explicit definition of the new element which came to him through Jesus, but often treats Christ as separate from God and essential for his religion. The parallel statement of to-day, "we should not know God apart from Jesus," will not bear examination.

The attribution of divinity to Jesus may keep men from the worship of God. It appears at first sight to make worship easier but, apart from being unsound historically, it evades the requirement of fellowship with God the Father, makes this seem harder than it really is, and tends to put Him into the background. This judgment is true of much popular teaching and worship.

Historically the attempt to bring God nearer through an intermediary has defeated its own object and led to further intermediaries, the Virgin and the saints.

Obviously an Atonement by the death of Jesus is inconsistent with the conclusions already reached. God the Father cannot need mediation. The theory valuable as enshrining the truer idea of the atoning suffering of God Himself, which liberates our trust in Him.

Orthodox Christology also enshrines the essential idea of the personality of God.

But we can have no screen, however transparent, between ourselves and God.

XI

THE VALUES OF THE THEORY OF DIVINITY

(*b*) The Danger of Pushing God into the Background

Though theologians accustomed to a skilful balancing of statement may regard the phrase as crude, in orthodox teaching and worship Jesus becomes something very like a second God. At least there is cause to ask what place the second Person of the Trinity fills in our religion and worship.

Those who have read any elementary book about the creeds will remember that " Person " is by general admission not a satisfactory word for its purpose. Its original Latin meaning was the actor's mask, the outward features under which appeared the actor, the real and, so to speak, the underlying man. Of course this comes close to the idea of " aspect " and there is irony in the fact that the word which in its original significance might have been criticized as allowing too little for the essential differences of the three divisions of the Trinity should have passed by changing usage to the associations of our word " person " with its sharp distinction of individualities. The authorities agree that for the Trinity the distinction, when expressed by " Persons " as modernly understood, is altogether too sharp and that the Greek *hypostasis* is better. They tell us that " aspect " distinguishes not enough and " personality " altogether too much, and they favour *hypostasis* as coming somewhere between the two. This word is valuable because, though it has scant, if any, meaning for us, it carries no meaning that is theologically wrong. That even at this date there should be no satisfactory English word, is a proof of the unusual complexity of the ideas involved in the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus, ideas among which the

theologian must tread the razor edge of professional accuracy. This is no highway for wayfaring men and many who are not fools will find it easy to err therein.

Now there are numerous passages in the New Testament which come down on the side of "personality" and so near to it that it is hard to give them any other interpretation. In benedictions Paul puts God and the Lord Jesus Christ side by side. The Christian lives his life "in Christ," which is to say that to be in communion with Christ is the centre of religion. Elsewhere Paul speaks as if the relation with Christ were all that is needed for the highest Christian experience. Expressions of this kind will not allow us to regard Christ as just an aspect of God; the distinction is too definite for that. If God and Christ were but two aspects of the same single personality, there would be no point in looking to both for blessing and the benedictions would not mention them side by side. They are certainly not two names for the same Deity.

On the other hand, these phrases make it impossible to regard Jesus as an intermediate being. It is true that through most of Paul's writing he depends upon God the Father in the background, ordering and directing the revelation in Christ, and, as has been said already, his expressions often suggest that Christ is in some way subordinate to the Father. But in many places Christ so fills the vision of the writer that there is no thought or need of a background. Notably for the purposes of personal religion the risen Lord can supply all the believer's need. Indeed, as the Church Councils realized in the Arian controversy, a subordinate being with divine powers and characteristics would be very near to one of the higher forms of polytheism.

If then we shrink equally from both 'personality' and 'aspect,' we are shut up to the exotic, evasive word "*hypostasis*" and must believe that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are three "*hypostases*" of the one Godhead. In any case this is an awkward solution; but we may doubt whether it is a solution at all. For we notice immediately that the second of the three *hypostases* is linked with a man's name and personality, a man who on the admission of modern

theologians shared in the ignorance of contemporary Palestine about facts of science, the causes of disease, and the authorship of books in the Old Testament, a man who seems to have expected a rapid and catastrophic ending to the age. It is this link with a particular human figure which distinguishes the second *hypostasis* from the other two and which creates our problem. For in large regions of personal religion the Church gives predominance to this second figure. Worship is the mark of what the worshipper deems central in religion, and much Christian worship focusses on Jesus.

Take any collection of prayers and you will find many addressed to Christ.* For the most part the collects of the English Prayer Book approach not Christ but God the Father. An exception is that for the third Sunday in Advent. But the Prayer Book is not averse to the direct worship of Christ, for the Litany appropriates to him a special clause of its opening, with the address "O God the Son, Redeemer of the world." The fact that it is necessary thus to repeat the prayer already sent up to "God the Father, of heaven" shows that Christ is regarded as a separate being. Two-thirds of the way through the Litany is a series of short sentences, the majority, if not all, addressed to Christ, under one or other of his titles, and so are the suffrages just before the last two collects. Both Morning and Evening Prayer make use of similar petitions to him immediately following the Creed. The end of the Communion Service (alike in its older and its alternative form) has a prayer to Jesus Christ concluding the Gloria. It

* See *A Chain of Prayer Across the Ages* compiled by Dr. Selina H. Fox. Scrutiny suggests that in the nineteenth century the practice of addressing prayers to Christ was common, but there are many ancient prayers with the same address. The fact that some of the collects addressed to Christ actually end "through Jesus Christ our Lord," though probably due to mechanical editing, indicates how little understanding may lie behind the practice.

In that beautiful little collection *Sursum Corda* there is one prayer which opens:

"O Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our sakes didst become poor, we pray Thee to protect them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in Thee, the living God. . . ."

Did the writer of this prayer hold that Christ was one "aspect" of the living God? As a rule, "the living God" is confined to God the Father.

would not be unfair to describe much Christian worship by saying that it treats Christ as a second God.

While I was in the process of writing this chapter, I heard an Anglican clergyman thus express the principle of devotion for his work in the slums of North London: "We do not worship a God in heaven; we worship a God who has been in heaven and has come out." To him Jesus was God; his mind was interested in the worship of Jesus alone.

In a paper read to a Theological Conference in Oxford (*Congregational Quarterly*, October 1928, p. 525) R. W. Thompson accepted the Prayer Book attitude with a refreshing frankness:

> In actual experience Christians vary in the terms they use. They speak of "The Living Present Christ," "The Spirit of Jesus," "The Eternal Spirit," or "The Father." It is difficult, if not impossible, to hold two Deities in mind as *equally* real and near. Either the Father or Jesus will be in the foreground. But does it finally matter? It is through Jesus we apprehend the Divine power which cleanses, feeds and guides our spirit.

The phrase "two Deities" may not be theologically acceptable, but does not a good deal of teaching and worship justify its use?

This leads us to ask: What new thing did Paul get through Jesus? In Eph. iii. 14–19 he dwells upon the marvel of the love of God, but in order to enjoy its full richness the believer must know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. Alongside the love of God why should another divine love be necessary or effective? If we had been able to question Paul face to face, I doubt whether he would have had a satisfactory answer; at least it is not in his writings. Apart from the answer that Jesus delivered men from the curse and condemnation of the Law—an answer obviously based on the need for deliverance from the legalistic emphasis of much current Pharisaic teaching—he would probably have concentrated on the ideas of "free approach" (*προσαγωγή*), "fearless confidence" (*παρρησία*) and "reconciliation" (*καταλλαγή*). The last of these

words seems to depend on a theory limiting God's power to forgive, which passed muster more readily amid the presuppositions of a sacrificial system than it does to-day. No one who deals honestly with his own sin and failure can doubt man's urgent need for reconciliation with God. But the Father is love, and why from its side the love of God cannot have direct access to His repentant children without some form of sacrificial mediation, theologians have never found it easy to explain. In the teaching of Jesus there is nothing to suggest a barrier which only a mediator can remove.

The other two ideas of "fearless confidence" and "free approach" are important as marking an advance in personal religion, but not sufficiently revolutionary to transform a man's whole relation to God.

Probably, when Paul had got so far in his formal answer to our inquiry, his mind would have moved on to his "Christ-mysticism," his beautiful conviction of union with Christ, which leads him to speak so often of living and acting "in Christ." Of the reality of this life-giving contact with the divine presence there can be no question, but Paul's descriptive interpretation of it is another matter. How did it differ from the experience of those who have concentrated their devotion upon God the Father and found life in union with Him? To Paul this distinction had plainly never presented itself; indeed now and then his expressions show confusion between the operations of God, of Christ and of the Spirit. But we may suspect that, when Paul became a Christian, the new thing he obtained was a new experience of God stimulated and heightened by the life and death of Jesus. If that is not the explanation, it becomes difficult to escape the conclusion that in Christ Paul discovered a second God, more accessible for worship and for spiritual union.

In modern days the essential parallel to the question about Paul is to ask what is the justification for the statement so confidently put forward in much current apologetic,—"We should not know God apart from Jesus," or even "Apart from Jesus we should know nothing of God." To assert

this is easier than to uphold it. Are we really to believe that the saints of the Old Testament did not know God? And does not the whole doctrine of a revelation of God in Jesus, whether orthodox or humanistic, turn on the comparison of the impression we receive from him with a conception of God previously present to our minds. For all its inadequacy this conception affords us a touchstone for the revelation Jesus brings. If there is ground for saying so flatly, "We should not know God apart from Jesus," how can we understand the word "divine" sufficiently to permit us to apply it to Jesus? Such apologists are exaggerating to make their case. It would be truer and more exact to say, "Apart from Jesus we should not know God so well." But the more guarded statement will not support the traditional argument that only through Jesus can men find salvation. Nor will it explain why men should set him in worship by the side of, and even in place of, God.

Further quotations from R. W. Thompson's paper will illustrate the dominance which many modernists attribute to the person of Christ:

> The ultimate authority we seek, then, will be such as will satisfy the whole of our personality and be equal to all its demands. We say, simply, that our final warrant for faith in a God-in-Whom-we-can-trust and for living the good life is *Jesus Christ, real and present in our experience, i.e.* in our spirits nourished by the Spirit of God, Who comes to us supremely in Jesus. We gain tidings of God and the good life from other sources. Yet Jesus is the supreme source and power. . . .
>
> The inner life of Jesus acting upon us is the source of the relief which comes to us at the moments of our deepest doubt. . . .
>
> Jesus Christ as final authority is not merely external, because though an other-than-ourselves (as Nature is) yet He does not force Himself upon us. He comes to our spirits and . . . satisfies our longing for God and nourishes the good life we want to live. He is the Son Who makes us free . . . we find Jesus to be a real

> present living One, Who communes with us. In some intimate moments indeed the fact of Jesus real and present so completely holds us that we would say all else is unreal by comparison.

[Then follows the paragraph quoted on p. 280.]

> All we say about the presence of the Living Christ or the Eternal Spirit comes to nothing without our sincere effort to commune with Him, through prayer, thought and obedience to His will.

This series of extracts is typical of certain modernist restatements of orthodoxy. Several of the sentences insist on a relation with Jesus which for the time being must make him the central object of worship. In the same way the trend of the argument leads naturally to the question whether God is not included in the " all else " which " is unreal by comparison " with Jesus. The words suggest that God is a distant being of whom we get tidings and warrant through Jesus, but that Jesus is the concern of our actual religion. The difference, however, which makes these quotations of unusual value is that in the paragraph quoted earlier R. W. Thompson states with complete frankness that this attitude to Jesus does involve " two Deities " and that the Christian cannot " hold them in mind as equally real and near." As he says, " Either the Father or Jesus will be in the foreground," and the whole tenor of the passage shows that it will not be the Father. We should know better where we stand if other guides were as willing to follow their argument to its logical and psychological conclusion. Until they do this, many will continue to suspect that the language of devotion often covers woolly thinking.

In this chapter we are called to face the possibility that *the attribution of divinity to Jesus may keep men from the worship of God.* The criticism is not imaginary or factious.

The intention, or perhaps rather the instinct, underlying the worship of Jesus is noble enough. It is no other than the cry from the depth of the human heart for communion

with God. With a vague and half-comprehended desire men yearn for that "free approach" to God of which Paul spoke and that "fearless confidence" of intercourse when they have entered the presence chamber. "Thou hast made us for Thyself," they murmur, "and our hearts are restless till they come to rest in Thee." Now the human figure of Jesus, when theology avers that he is Christ, God the Son, seems to make it easier to approach God. The identification helps us to feel an answering human throb in the heart of the Godhead. As Browning puts it in *Saul:*

O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

Yet in spite of the beauty of the idea itself and of the expressions it evokes, the effect is dangerous. It means that we escape the harder task of fellowship with God. It means that God fills a smaller place in our thought and worship.

Some may deprecate the talk of danger. "We get to God in Christ," they will urge, "and if that does result in a measure of indifference to the first Person of the Trinity, need it matter very much? In any case we get to Godhead." * But suppose that the attribution of divinity to Jesus is based on a false judgment of the Gospels, that judgment being based in its turn upon an earlier misreading by the disciples of the meaning of his life and death. Historic truth will suffer no breach of its laws, however helpful be the "noble lie." It is just here that the suspicions of the younger people are most operative to alienate them from the Church. And suppose again that this attribution produces a popular religion focussed upon a Saviour full of mercy, to whom we turn in all the warmer moments of our religious experience, with the inevitable contrast of a

* See the passage on p. 84 about the omission of any mention of God in the closing verses of Matthew.

supreme God looming stony in the background.* That there is such a popular religion no one can doubt who looks at certain collections of hymns,—there are some with whole sections which show no interest in God—and its influence extends upward into the thought and tinges the worship of men who have a real knowledge of theology.

In Japan for 700 years before the liberating revolution of 1867–8 the Shoguns had been the articulate ministers and chief generals of the true Emperors, the Mikados, and as time went on they usurped the functions of operative government and made the Emperor a figure-head. For the final 250 years they eclipsed the Emperor so completely that early foreign representatives like Commander Perry assumed that the Shogun was in fact the Emperor. One book describes him thus :

> The Shogun was still nominally the minister and vassal of the Emperor, but the latter lived in splendid retirement at Kyoto, while the former ruled in the Emperor's name at Yedo.

Supporters of the usurping regime, or those too indolent to desire change, might well have asked whether it mattered very much. The Government was carried on, the imperial writ ran everywhere in Japan, foreign Powers never dreamed of challenging the *de facto* administration. What more could a country want ? But at long last constitutional right asserts itself over constitutional wrong, and the king comes to his own again.

The worship of Jesus Christ has tended to create an idea of God like the Mikado "in splendid retirement," a God who has not the attributes which Jesus gave Him. By contrast the worship of Jesus has diminished the incentives to worship the Father. I am not speaking of the theoretic statements of theology but of actual religious practice.

* See the story on p. 280, and again this :—

"We have to love God and obey Him as Jesus loved and obeyed Him. The Father is by some reached that way. But for others of us He is remote and hard to visualize, whereas Jesus we can see and love." (John Bevan, *Christian World*, April 10, 1930.)

Recently I received a tract with the title *Jesus Only*. The phrase marks a type of "evangelical" writing and speech. The author would have been shocked to realize it, but its general effect is to put the Father into a secondary place. At the other end of the scale a paper by a theological professor works up to the inference that "the Crucified Christ is the highest known value." The writer never intended to produce the same effect as the title of the tract, but his anxiety to push his apologetic to a convincing conclusion led him to use this loose expression. In the story of Sadhu Sundar Singh there is what seems to me a painful instance—in these days of heart-searching it is well to remember that the pain is not always on one side—of the result of "evangelical" teaching about Jesus.*

Streeter and Appasamy quote him thus: pp. 54 f. of *The Sadhu* (Macmillan):

> At one time I was a good deal perplexed about the doctrine of the Trinity. I had thought of three separate Persons sitting as it were on three thrones; but it was all made plain to me in a Vision. I entered in an Ecstasy into the third heaven. I was told it was the same to which St. Paul was caught up. And there I saw Christ in a glorious spiritual body sitting on a throne. Whenever I go there it is the same. Christ is always in the centre, a figure ineffable and indescribable. . . .
>
> The first time I entered Heaven I looked round and I asked, "But where is God?" And they told me, "God is not to be seen here any more than on earth, for God is Infinite. But there is Christ, He is God, He is the Image of the Invisible God, and it is only in Him that we can see God, in Heaven as on earth." And streaming out from Christ I saw, as it were, waves

* I disagree somewhat with Streeter upon the originality in the mysticism of the Sadhu. Sundar Singh was exposed to the influence of missionary teaching well before his conversion, and for an Indian High School boy there are a hundred ways in which Christian doctrine may filter through. In this particular vision we may also trace the tinge of philosophic Hinduism, which has been so revolted by idolatry that it will allow no opening for communion with the supreme God and will only speak of Him in negations.

> shining and peace-giving, and going through and among the Saints and Angels, and everywhere bringing refreshment, just as in hot weather water refreshes trees. And this I understood to be the Holy Spirit.

Of course any precise theologian will repudiate the thought of this passage. But many of the hymns we use and value most are filled with ideas of Jesus which put him in the place of God.

> Crown Him with many crowns,
> All hail the power of Jesu's name,
> Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
> O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
> Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
> How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
> Jesus, Sun and Shield art Thou,

and scores of other favourite hymns have a practical result which comes very close to the vision of Sundar Singh. I quote these because I love them all:—for men of my upbringing and generation they have associations with some of our deepest experiences of religion,—but can we doubt that their tendency is to push God away into a background where we forget that He is our Father? If Jesus could come into the midst of worship of this type, I am sure he would ask with Sundar Singh, "But where is God?" And with sorrow that men had so misinterpreted him he would reject Sundar Singh's answer and the tendency of these beloved hymns.*

The fact is that we still tend to think of God as far off, though the main battle of religion is to feel Him near. Jesus tried to teach his disciples the nearness of God and he

* How unconsidered can be our use of hymns I felt in January 1929 at the conference in Liverpool of the Student Christian Movement. After F. R. Barry had been trying to fix the thought of his hearers upon the view of God which Jesus gave to men and had urged that this was central to Christianity, there followed the hymn "O come, all ye faithful," which (in the version used) sings the praise of Jesus himself as "God of God" and "very God," refers to God only indirectly and does not even remotely suggests Jesus' view of God.

succeeded, but not enough to prevent them from interposing his own figure after he was crucified. Paul fixed on the terms of "free approach" and "reconciliation" in order to show that in Jesus God was near, but he did not see that by making Jesus indispensable for these blessings he removed God a stage further away. The struggle to realize that God is near is for ever renewed and to this day we are ever failing.

There is an element in our human nature that does not want God too near. His presence makes demands upon us we are not prepared to honour. In Christian history the leaders of the early Church interposed Jesus to link them with a God who was far off. But as they invested Jesus with the functions of the Godhead, they naturally included the function of judgment, and his story in the Gospels contained reminders that he could be severe. As long as he was set in contrast with the vicious and revengeful godlings of paganism, his figure was beautiful enough to attract men, even though there came out from his mouth a two-edged sword. When, however, the external pressure of paganism died away and its spirit frequently appeared within the Church itself, men began to find Christ too stern, and turned to the Virgin; as a woman she was compassionate and no one had associated sword or judgment seat with her. So the Church permitted her worship.* That the movement inclined dangerously towards idolatry is illustrated by the facility with which the local cults of goddesses of the old mythology were baptized into her name, with the result that the powers ascribed to each became the special efficacies of each local Virgin. But as time passed by, the fact of worship inevitably made men sensitive to the "numinous" in her exaltation. Her too they came to regard with awe and a certain shrinking. The blessed saints would be more complacent and approachable; no story of immaculate conception lifted them beyond human weakness, they were

* "The solution of the Arian controversy, however correct it may have been theoretically, undoubtedly had the practical effect of relegating the God-man redeemer for ordinary minds into a far-away region of 'remote and awful Godhead,' so that the need for a mediator to deal with the very Mediator could not fail to be felt." (*Encyc. Brit.* on "Mary," edition 13, Vol. XVII, p. 813, by J. S. Black and K. Lake.)

men and women of like passions with the worshippers. Thus the Church was led forward to saint-worship, a third step further from God.

A similar pressure may be detected in other religions, and a similar paradox. Buddha taught that there was no God and that for release man must depend on his obedience to the Law. But the teaching proved too high for his disciples, especially in Northern Buddhism, and as they felt compelled to acquire a God for worship, they began to worship Buddha himself. After Buddha they went on to the Buddhist saints. In North India some two thousand years later Kabir fought with pertinacity and humour against the idolatry he saw all around him. He got a great following for his message of one God,—and when he was dead, they worshipped Kabir. At many shrines the Moslems worship prophets and saints. For worship, like economics, has its Gresham's Law that debased coinage always drives out the pure money.

Some such process was inevitable for those who forgot to listen to Jesus' teaching of the simple nearness of God the Father. Once the Church had yielded to the preference for a figure that seemed more approachable than the Father, she committed herself to give way again and again, again and again to move a stage further from Him. In the battle to win the conception of God's Fatherhood for daily religion, to make it the glorious presupposition of the thought, worship and conduct of the ordinary man, the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus was the first surrender. It is at once paradox and nemesis that the concession which was subconsciously directed to bring God nearer had the effect of thrusting Him further away.

By now it must be plain that the views stated in this book are incompatible with the theory of an atonement by the death of Jesus, a theory demanding faith in his death as indispensable for salvation.* In Hosea the Old Testament

* As, for instance, in the Prayer Book Communion Service, "most humbly beseeching thee to grant, that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion."

shows us God forgiving without a mediator. Or take that lofty passage of Jer. xxxi. 33–4:

> I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall teach every man no more his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

There God offers the fullness of His communion and the forgiveness which opens the door to it, without a hint that the intervention of another would serve any purpose of good. The group of parables illustrating God's longing for the return of the lost and culminating in the Prodigal Son seems to impose no condition for forgiveness except a sincere desire for it, and in all the teaching of Jesus there are only the words of institution in the Lord's Supper and the doubtful phrase "to give his life a ransom for many," from which it might be possible to infer that any other could come, much less ought to come, between the sinful soul and the Father. Even in these instances many would contest the inference.* It is significant that in the successive stages of her voyage the Church has cast overboard this and that portion of earlier atonement doctrine. She will have to jettison the rest. For to those who have grasped the Gospel of the love of God and are freed from the obligation to accept ideas simply because they are in the Bible, the requirement of mediation becomes impossible. There can be no intercessor, no intermediary, between God and man. The attempt to interpose one always produces a subordinate God, on whom actual worship, as we have seen, more and more inclines to concentrate. It also produces—

* We should remember that the sacrificial system was always recalling men's minds to the demand for propitiation. This is one more example of the way in which the priest tended to neutralize the free message of the prophet. At that period sacrificial conceptions were spread wide over the whole religious world. "The age . . . was saturated with the idea of the efficacy of the intercession of martyrs." (Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, p. 112.)

what is even more serious—the conception of a God who needs mediation, *i.e.* a different God from the Father of whom Jesus taught. Read any modern attempt to explain the theory of Atonement and you will be impressed by its indefiniteness and hesitancy. Indeed it seems difficult to commend effectively apart from some picture of a transaction in a realm that is too often neither spiritual nor ethical. This transaction theory may easily result in laxity of conduct.*

The doctrine of the Atonement has survived because in its complicated and mistaken form it contained a glorious truth. In Jesus on the Cross, in Jesus remembered and "received" in the Lord's Supper, men laid hold on one idea—a God who suffers. Here was the divine Lord dying for them. The thought rings true to our spiritual life and the demands it makes. (1) If God be a loving, holy Father, there can be no escape for Him from the pain of His children's sin. Only by ceasing to love can the Holy One escape the pain. (2) "Pain wipes blame away." This is a mystery I cannot pretend to fathom. In God's time men of more developed insight and goodness will sound it deeper and will explain to the Church more of the wonder and reasonableness of this divine suffering. All I can express is the conviction, which will meet an echo in the hearts of many, that God's pain does take sin away.† God cannot alter the laws of suffering, physical, mental and spiritual, but He can suffer alongside those who must bear it. At the end we are assured that the universe is with those who brace their shoulders to the burden of pain, and that, for men of faith at least, pain is not the whole story. About this hateful thing, suffering, there is a curious attractiveness and efficacy. It is certain that if he had been able to guide the settlement after the Civil War, Lincoln would have done further noble service for his country, and yet in some incomprehensible way he is greater because he was assassinated at the moment of victory. The stigmata of Francis count for

* See pp. 159 ff.

† Von Hügel attacks the idea in one paper among his *Essays and Addresses*, Series II. The paper is interesting but one-sided and unconvincing. "That pain can be made creative is the secret of Christianity" (Streeter, *Adventure*, p. 130).

more than his gaiety. When, after the cruel struggle of those few months at the end, Livingstone fell upon his knees by his bed and died in prayer, he did a deed for Africa which was more decisive than all his exploration and advocacy.

And so it is a true instinct which made the authors of the four Gospels give a quarter of their space to the Passion. When we read it as the story of a human sufferer,* we feel ourselves in the presence of something significant for the deepest need of the soul and for that very reason significant for mankind. It speaks with quiet mastery to the best in universal human nature. The holiest and kindest of the sons of men died in disaster and agony of spirit. Glimpse by glimpse we begin to see that in this he reveals God more than in the noblest words or actions of his life, that all the rest finds its meaning and climax here, and that the death was victory.

> And looking . . .
> Upon these perishing and gone astray,
> Lifted the hands of help, alone, unarmed,
> Struck singly out, and dashed upon the rocks.
> And in that shock did meet His human doom
> Of suffering, and took it for a crown;
> The loneliness, the weariness, the strife,
> The base return, the Passion and the Cross,
> And the withdrawal of His Father's face.
> —So that for ever since, in minds of men,
> By some true instinct this life has survived
> In a religious immemorial light,
> Pre-eminent in one thing most of all;
> The Man of Sorrows;—and the Cross of Christ
> Is more to us than all His miracles.
>
> (*The Sermon in the Hospital*, Mrs. Hamilton King.)

That, our hearts tell us, is what God is like. He suffers for the sin of men and His suffering appeals to men as the death of Christ appeals and makes us feel that we must break

* For instance, in *By an Unknown Disciple.*

loose from all alliance with sin. In that sense it is an Atonement, for it changes our attitude of hostility and guilty fear and begets in our minds a spirit of reconciliation. But it is an Atonement in another sense also. The pain modifies the balance of the universe as it affects us, and neutralizes the power of sin to infect our spirits and to entangle us in our past. That God suffers is a counter-weight to the malice, the misdirection and the misery of the world.

This intuition that God suffers is one of the gifts of the corporate thinking of the last thirty years.*

Above all it liberates our trust in the love of God. It is desperately hard to believe in that love, especially for those in sin and for those who suffer. And about certain presentations of the love of God there may be something cheap and facile. For men in moral extremity the preaching of a sentimental benevolence is not a Gospel; it does not go deep enough to be convincing. At that price we can expect nothing that will touch the roots of a trouble like ours. But if we can conceive that the love is mingled with pain, that God is made to serve by our sins and tired out by our iniquities,† then we can be assured that His love is powerful enough and realistic enough to meet our case. Our hesitation is removed when we feel that a price is being continuously paid.

In His life Jesus was, more than any other, the revelation of God, and his death taught a Gospel of divine love that conquers the world's sin by identifying itself with the sinner and bearing the pain which the identification costs. But the death of Christ did not "make atonement," it revealed that atonement forms part of the dealing of the Father

* See *Concerning Prayer*, edited by Streeter and Dougall, p. 33. Also George Adam Smith, *Isaiah*, II. p. 142 :—

". . . the true Old Testament prophecy of the nature and work of Jesus Christ is found not so much in the long promise of the exalted human ruler, for whom Israel's eyes looked, as in the assurance of God's own descent to battle with His people's foes and to bear their sins. In this God, omnipotent, yet in His zeal and love capable of passion, who before the Incarnation was afflicted in all His people's affliction, and before the Cross made their sin His burden and their salvation His agony, we see the love that was in Jesus Christ."

† Isaiah xliii. 24.

with His children, simply because it is part of the Father's nature.

Orthodox Christology contains one further element of permanent worth which we must not surrender but rather emphasize. The worship of Jesus, a man with a man's characteristic personality, renewed and emphasized the idea that deity is personal. The doctrine that Jesus was God the Son guaranteed that we could have personal dealings with God and that He was more than "a power not ourselves." Just as the doctrine of a propitiation offered by Jesus to God, now untenable and discarded, has conveyed, like a shell around the kernel, the truth that God's is a suffering and redeeming love, so the doctrine of divinity has enshrined and protected the hypothesis that God is personal. It is possible that the assurance of the personality of God could have survived in no other way. Undoubtedly the assurance is essential to any Christianity that is worth the name; it is a postulate of the teaching of Jesus. Much in the modern world seems to deny it; a thinker as reverent as Julian Huxley will have none of it. Yet those who have lived in the Christian way have an unconquerable certainty that they are in communion with a Person. In that communion they live day by day: they discover that it works, that all manner of power comes to them which no other hypothesis will explain. We can no longer ground it upon inferences from our personal relation with the God-man, but we can still find support for the reasonableness of our conviction in the life of Jesus. Of him we may say that the best life we know was intensely personal, nowhere more personal than in his goodness. Such a life never in the smallest deflection wavers towards that absorption in deity which some Eastern religion would treat as the proof and crown of spiritual achievement. The more Jesus enters into communion with God, the more compelling is the impression of his personality. In a less degree we can see the same in others.

This suggests that personality is one of the ultimate values of human life.

If that be granted, there is much to be said for the wide-

spread instinct that God is personal. God cannot fall below man in any spiritual quality. With Him personality may be something so transcendent, so 'produced,' in the geometric use of the word, beyond our little achievement of it, that it may be hard to couple it with any personality that we conceive. The difficulty applies not less to His love or to His holiness. But the reality must be there in God's nature, even though its quality and intensity soar above our range of vision.

The conclusion of the whole matter is that our religious life turns upon our knowing God Himself in the richness, the tenderness and the grandeur of His Fatherly affection. So Jesus knew Him. This gave the light and the glow to His teaching.

The Church has interposed the screen of the divinity of Christ. It is a beautiful screen and well-nigh transparent. But always the value of the screen was in the rays that came through it. And now since new discovery shows that the screen impedes certain rays of the perfect light of God, it is our business to accustom ourselves to behold the full glory of the Lord with unveiled faces. As we school ourselves to bear it, we shall prove that its radiance is humble, homely and adapted to our childish capacity to receive. If we take God for Father, and depend upon Him with the faith of Jesus, we shall find in the simple, fatherly communion which He offers everything that our spirits need.

Of one thing I am sure; Jesus would have been shocked and saddened if he had dreamed that men would worship him in the Father's stead.

XII

Summary

Unless alienation from the Church is to proceed further, we must allow more latitude in theological statement.

Those who accept the thought of this book—

(*a*) will restate their theology, freeing themselves from the ancient creeds and modern compromises;

(*b*) will make alterations in worship, hymns and ritual;

(*c*) will be called to greater tolerance, and be under special obligation to maintain the spiritual emphasis of Jesus.

Frequent unfairness of the criticism that Unitarianism is sterile; but the polity of most Unitarian congregations does seem to handicap them for any concerted religious effort and above all for propaganda.

The Christian Church is bound to search for truth but must be founded on the view of God that Jesus gave.

What Christians have found in the worship of Jesus has all the time been a communion with God, and, therefore, the modification of our theology need not mean a modification of religion. In God the Father there is all the tenderness we associate with Jesus.

We need a warmer 'devotion' to God.

XII

THINGS THAT CHANGE AND THINGS THAT REMAIN

What then are the practical consequences of the argument of the previous chapters?

The first is that many of our formulations of belief can stand unchanged no longer.

I have been surprised to find how many lay people assume with quiet certitude that Jesus was a prophet who attained a communication with God so pure and continuous that he could reveal Him uniquely, but that he was not God the Son. They are still loyal to the Church, and in that fellowship they face innumerable perplexities as they attempt to relate their conviction to public worship and teaching. They often look in vain for guidance and relapse into themselves. If that is the case of those who remain loyal, it is plain that among those on the fringe of the Church there is a dangerous unrest. These come intermittently to her services and listen critically to her teaching, but canvass both teaching and services rebelliously when they get outside.

Again, there is the class of religiously-minded people who have abandoned the Church. Doubts and questions ferment beneath the surface, and find outlet in amateur discussions between those who, as a rule, have no competent knowledge of the essential data. Often one is astonished at their subtlety and penetration, but they rarely reach a conclusion for want of a body of teaching such as their honesty will permit them to accept. They are like men with splendid tools, who can only get scraps of cross-grained wood on which to work. It is pathetic to see how much potential devotion and service is going to waste. Yet the newspapers and the wireless programmes offer abundant

evidence of the public interest in religion, and above all in Christianity. If a particular Church has convinced men that it stands for brotherhood and service and that it is prepared for experiment, thousands who rarely enter a place of worship will fence off the time scrupulously in order to listen in to its service. There is nothing more characteristic of our time, nothing to which we ought to give more humble attention and inquiry, than the existence of this multitude of reverent, open minds which have ceased to look to the corporate Church for teaching. Yet the corporate Church is the only body that has the apparatus to teach. One cause of the alienation is our conservative theology.

The Church, then, must allow a new latitude in theological statement. In some quarters this has already gone far, though, for want of the needful repudiations, men have overlooked its significance. It was noteworthy, for instance, throughout the series of articles by religious leaders in the *Daily News* of 1928 under the title "If Christ came to London," that not one of them suggested even remotely that Christ would preach himself as the way of salvation. Yet this is supposed to be the centre of the Christian message. There should be freedom to widen this latitude. What will be the practical consequence is beyond the wit of man to predict. No one can measure the unrest in certain sections of the Church, but it is equally true that no one can measure the reasoned attachment to orthodox belief or the unreasoning dislike of change. It may prove impossible to keep under one ecclesiastical roof those who take the position that Jesus was human and those who are sure that he lives for our salvation as God the Son. If so, no one will regret it more than those who are compelled to restate their faith. But restate it they must, or be disloyal to all that they have learnt from Jesus. We should make every effort to keep in touch with one another and to recognize the essential unity of religion which underlies our differing descriptions of it. Time will show how far we succeed. Here I can do no more than suggest in the most general terms the consequences which follow for those who accept the main position of this book.

(a) *They will express their theology in a new way*

For long many of them have been unwilling to stand for the conception of the Trinity or the passages in the Creeds confessing Jesus as Very God of Very God, pre-existent and the agent in creation. In silence they have passed over the clauses defining the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. They will now have to make explicit their inability to describe Jesus as different from other men in anything but spiritual capacity and superior sensitiveness to God. The Creeds as refurbished at such united gatherings as that of Lausanne will have small meaning or interest for them. Indeed they will expect little of theological value at this stage from assemblies representing the various Churches, since these invariably attach undue importance to the corpus of tradition. For a true theology there must first be fearless examination of the results of criticism followed by long and reverent meditation upon them. Deeply as theology is rooted in the past, its leaves and flowers must draw their life and colour from the sunlight of to-day. Men so minded will preach the Gospel which they believe Jesus preached, the Gospel of God's redeeming love to all His children and they will call men to dedicate everything, even life itself, to establish His kingdom upon earth. All the time they will try to turn the thought of men to Jesus as the highest example of the way God lives Himself into the men and women who are willing to receive Him. They will treat the Bible with the reverence due to documents which have proved themselves to contain a revelation of God unfolding progressively from primitive religion, but they will not be biassed in favour of history or doctrines simply because they are found in it. They will not quote convenient verses from the Fourth Gospel as if assured that they came from the lips of Jesus.

Inevitably the Bible will be more difficult to teach. Some have already grown accustomed to explaining that, according to the stage of their religious evolution, the men of the Old Testament were often primitive in their standards of history and mistaken in their views of God. It will now

be necessary to do the same with the New. Probably a considerable time will pass before there is a general agreement among teachers about the parts of the Bible which have a message for this generation, and it will take still longer for this to become the common knowledge of the average member of a Church or the boy or girl of fifteen in a Sunday School. During that period explanations will necessarily be slow and tentative. In the meantime there is compensation in the thought that, as the problem of the Bible becomes more complex, religion itself becomes simpler. How many young people of observant minds the Church has lost because she has presented them with scholastic or contradictory ideas of God!

It may be that, freed from the bondage of a Christology they have outgrown, Christians will come gradually to an understanding of the significance of Jesus which shall do fuller justice than is possible in this age of criticism to that mysterious uniqueness which led the Church to call him God the Son.

(b) *There will be alterations in worship*

Those who are convinced that Jesus was human will not use trinitarian forms of prayer or benediction and, because they will not wish to suggest that God needs an intercessor to make Him listen to His children's prayers, they will not end their prayers 'for Christ's sake.' They will not appeal to Jesus as living or present in a different way from Paul or Francis or those of our own departed whose unseen presence, as we dimly apprehend, God is using to carry His message to us; they will pray to God, as Jesus taught men to do. I think they will hesitate to teach even little children to pray to Jesus, lest in those sensitive years they should fix the impression that there is a divine figure kinder and more approachable than the Father.

In public worship certain sections of the New as well as of the Old Testament will only be read with the warning that they must not be taken as of the essence of the Christian Gospel. Alongside the Bible the Church will use other passages of great literature which are plainly inspired by God.

Right down the Christian centuries God has been speaking to men, the Gospel He sent through Jesus has been fulfilling its destined purpose, and the Church cannot afford to neglect the resulting store of grace. He did not limit His Spirit to Palestine—or for that matter to Christendom.

What of the hymns? The answer to this question is at once easier and harder; easier because in all modern collections there are abundant hymns in which, as Jesus would have had us, we sing our praise and address our aspiration to God; harder because many of the hymns we love most, treat Jesus as the object of worship. The difficulty is even greater where hymns of this second class have noble associations with the history of the Church. The trinitarian sections notwithstanding, there ought to be a way of retaining the outpourings of faith and devotion in the *Te Deum* and *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, and such hymns as *Jesus dulcis memoria* (Jesus, the very thought of thee) and *Ein feste Burg*, with the outstanding hymns to Christ of men like the Wesleys, Watts and James Montgomery. It may be found that, once men have made their conviction clear beyond the risk of misunderstanding, they can sing these hymns in order to link themselves with the succession of the saints. I shall suggest in a few pages that men may find help in both prayers and hymns expressing the older views, if they are willing to disregard the literal expression and interpret them as the search for and worship of the living God. The mystics have often had recourse to this method. As long as it is not used to disguise convictions, there is much in its favour. We must consider brotherly fellowship as well as honesty.

The Communion Service is obviously the most perplexing of our ritual. Though they realize that Jesus died because of the sin of the world of his time and that his death must have a limitless influence, those who see no meaning in saying that Jesus died for our sins will not readily understand how his body and blood are given for themselves. Nor will they accept the idea that they are to feed upon his body and drink his blood, however spiritually the figures may be understood. It is possible to treat the service not only as a memorial of the death of the Master who did so much to

bring us to know God, but also as a sacrament of the divine hospitality, and to remember that this hospitality to sinful men is purchased at the price of the pain of God.* This divine hospitality carries with it the brotherhood of those who receive it. But some may feel a certain unreality in associating these ideas with the acts of eating and drinking which have been so long connected with another theory. Fuller study of the Gospels may give us more light on what Jesus meant by his words and acts at his last meal with the disciples. In the meantime it is worth while to remember that the Quakers have maintained the spiritual life without any sacrament.

Finally, our worship must be sincere. Sincerity is a great word to take upon our lips and its implications are often neither so simple nor so rigid as we might at first believe. But if leaders continue to conduct worship in terms which express to the worshippers something which the leaders do not really hold, it must act as a slow poison in any Christian body. On the other hand, though at the beginning sincerity may seem bare and even austere, a day will come when men will awake to its beauty. Thereafter they will give to its message a loyalty which nothing can undermine.

(c) *There will be need for a humbler and more patient tolerance*

To expect that we can escape a period of tension and heart-burning would be the optimism not of faith but of superficiality. The doctrines questioned mean so much to men that readjustment must involve suffering. The only chance of continued co-operation and of any progress towards Christian unity will lie in the generosity which can suspend judgment of a brother and believe that he too is working towards a higher truth. There will be hostility in many quarters, some of it a genuine zeal for the cause of the Lord, apparently in danger, some the invariable reaction of ecclesiastical systems forced to stand upon their defence.

* See pp. 291 ff.

Those who are called to be, as Kirsopp Lake has named them, Experimentalists, must not be surprised if the Institutionalists, those who by office or temper are committed to bolster up the established order, give them no reinforcement until the battle has been won. Lake describes what the Experimentalists must prepare to meet:

> Moreover, when Experimentalists are attacked by the Fundamentalist element in their own Church, they have as a rule little support from the Institutionalists, who seem to have studied deeply the story of Jonah, and hasten to throw overboard those who are attacked or at least to leave them undefended on the ground that they have been irritating in their manner or insufficiently "spiritual" in their speech or are wrong in some minor detail. They do not side with the Fundamentalists, but they are careful to abstain from any overt act of support to an Experimentalist. One by one the Experimentalists are picked off by individual attacks and the moral of the situation is not lost on the younger men. (*Religion of Yesterday and To-morrow*, p. 162. Christophers.)

Happily there is no Church about which these bitter words will express more than a portion of the truth.

But some of the conflict will be avoided if those who are compelled to renounce the orthodox position will give earnest heed to be true to the personal religion which Jesus taught and to deepen that religion among those who follow their lead. Those who strike out in new directions are under a special obligation to insist upon the lessons of the historic faith and to maintain the spiritual emphasis of Jesus himself. If in life and in worship they can show an unmistakable, if imperfect, likeness to his faith in the Father and his love to men, if they can school the Church in prayer as he schooled his disciples, the time of misunderstanding will be shortened and a new birth of religion will come from its travail.

In the meantime it behoves us all to seek the mind which oversteps the boundaries of denomination, school of thought

or credal profession and which refuses to estimate men or movements by popular labels. The next chapter makes suggestions as to the way in which this will affect the foreign missionary. For our own land it is essential that we should conquer the divisive temper which is the sad and mistaken consequence of many of our nobler loyalties. The greatest argument for Church union lies in the psychological fact that, with blessed exceptions, men tend to treat the line which includes them within their group as if it were a frontier of exclusion. That which distinguishes tends inevitably to divide, and it is only by watchfulness, love and a sense of humour that we can resist the tendency.

Our perplexities to-day ought to make us kindlier in our thought of heretics and those who see truth from an angle other than our own. If they are seeking for reality in belief and conduct, above all if they are trying to find communion with God and bring His kingdom on earth, we ought to have spiritual kinship with them. The Christian should be the readiest to identify and to welcome any movement which is groping after God, but there are not many Churches that have taught us to give this welcome.

I know how strong in my own case was the prejudice against Unitarians and even against the word. I repent of it now. It has been surprising to find in others that it was as deep as it was undiscriminating. Men in what are called the "evangelical" bodies can hold views which, if not over the line, are so near to Unitarianism that the discrepancy can only be measured by instruments of scientific precision. Yet they still remain in good standing in their Churches. But, should they feel that honesty compels them to range themselves with Unitarians, they seem to pass beyond the pale. One cause is fear. Some who are most vehement are subconsciously afraid that they may be compelled to accept the same belief. Precisely because von Hügel was not afraid, he was free from this prejudice and, while he held his own faith loyally, his letters show that he did not feel the gulf impassable to Christian fellowship.

The thought has many applications beyond Unitarianism. The standards of Jesus will not allow us to hold aloof from

the Samaritans, of whatever form of creed and worship. Movements in the mission field can teach us something here.

This may be the place to discuss the frequent allegation that Unitarianism is sterile. There are many who parrot this cry with little attempt to justify it by examination. It is certainly not so decisive as they think. The time is not propitious for any among the "evangelical" Churches to repeat it. The drop in the figures of Church attendance applies to all. Or take the Friends, the Quakers. Compared to the other Nonconforming bodies they were far stronger in numbers about the end of the seventeenth century than they are to-day; yet no one speaks of them as sterile. The Friends have borne a distinctive label and their witness against war has marked them out and brought their service into the general gaze. But, without anything to distinguish them except their unpopular theology, Unitarians also have done great public service. In many centres men and women in their ranks have stood out amid the Christian community as champions of the cause of brotherhood and righteousness. The *Manchester Guardian*, perhaps the nearest among the daily papers of the world to the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, has owed much to Unitarian influence.

Yet Unitarians will admit that all is not well. In his book *The Unitarians* (Methuen) Henry Gow has some frank and arresting sentences:

> The present condition of Congregations known as Unitarian is disconcerting and difficult to explain. . . . They are regarded by many of the orthodox as outside the Christian Church, and by many of the unorthodox as ineffective and cold pale copies of the past, rather than heralds of the dawn. . . .
>
> There is, no doubt, some truth in these criticisms. It is an extremely difficult enterprise to build up a Free Church, whose only foundation is a belief in God and a reverence for the spirit and teaching of Jesus.

Gow goes on to describe the type of theological freedom characteristic of the Unitarian Churches, or, as he often prefers it, Congregations. Many will feel that in this freedom lies the explanation of the criticisms to which he has referred:

> Membership of the Free Church usually called Unitarian is generally permitted to anyone who subscribes a certain amount per year to the Church funds . . . in few, if any, Congregations are questions asked as to belief or even character. . . . The only bond of union among them may be a common dislike to make any profession of belief at all. . . . There is something attractive to them in the idea of unpledged, free minds, with differing thoughts and beliefs meeting together for worship and for prayer. It is a daring experiment!
>
> Among Unitarians no questions are asked, and nothing is implied, except that it may be supposed that the new subscriber is in general sympathy with the teaching of the Church of which he desires to become a member. But that teaching might consist conceivably mainly in lectures on Art and Literature . . . on Science . . . on the New Psychology, or an attack on Orthodoxy, or . . . on Capitalism. General sympathy with the preacher might put the Church into the hands of voting members who were mainly interested in Literature or Science, or members who desired nothing but the last new theories in Psychology, or members who regarded their Church as an instrument for attacking every form of Christianity or every form of economic theory different from their own.
>
> There is no method by which a Free Church true to its principles can wholly avoid these dangers. It is an inherent weakness in an undogmatic Church. But we are justified in claiming that it is a great ideal, and that it may be a great strength. (Pp. 160–65.)

After reading these lines, most of those who have been concerned with the working of Churches of other denomina-

tions will wonder that Unitarians have accomplished what they have. The usual conception of a Christian Church—surely not an unreasonable one, though many would, of course, regard it as a bare minimum—is that it exists for the worship of God according to the message of Jesus Christ, and to propagate the teaching of Jesus about our relation to God and man. Anyone, ordained or lay, who has ever had responsibility for a Church service will ask how it is possible to conduct the worship of God when there can be no assurance that even those whose official membership constitutes the Church have either a belief in God or a desire to worship Him. Again, how is it possible to teach? Most ministers know how paralysing can be the influence of one or two persons of strong character who disagree with the teaching which the minister feels called to give. Yet in an ordinary Church the minister has behind him the majority of its members, together with the support of a credal statement or a doctrinal understanding which is the substitute for a creed. In the eyes of most of us the glory of a true ministry is that it expresses the purpose and desire of the corporate body of the Church. Gow insists that the Unitarian minister can only state his own view. Even on the most central points of his faith he can assume nothing more than that his hearers like to listen to him. His successor may alter the general tone of the group-consciousness in the most radical way, and during all his ministry the nearest Church of the same order may be totally indifferent to the objects to which he is devoting every power.

I do not forget that in an orthodox Church a change of ministry frequently changes the direction of its teaching, and that its tone differs somewhat from that of its neighbour, but those divergences are limited by the constitution of the united body, while among the Baptists and Congregationalists, who are not protected by credal statements, the lay members of the individual Church are alive to their corporate responsibility to see that the teaching of their Church is in accord with Christianity as they interpret it under the guidance of God's Spirit. Nor do I forget that in many Unitarian congregations the minister and the

members regard the worship of God as the object of their association and the life and teaching of Jesus as their highest guide.* Yet according to Gow this is a matter of accident. Gow claims it as a great ideal that Unitarian Congregations are committed to nothing. Some of us have resented the uncharitable exclusiveness, as it seemed, of those who denied to Unitarians the title of Christian. Yet a definition such as that quoted above makes it difficult to protest. There appears to be no assurance that any particular Congregation will be interested either in the worship of God or in the historic figure on whom Christianity is based. But does the definition correspond to the real life of many Unitarian Churches?

The progress of any group, political, educational or religious, depends on its power to propagate itself. The group must have some idea or object on which to call men to unite. A Church exists to give a message, a Gospel, and to reveal God to men. The liberty which Dr. Gow described will seem to most readers to be the natural foundation of a

* This comes out clearly in the last lines of the first quotation from Gow on p. 305, "whose only foundation is a belief in God and a reverence for the spirit and teaching of Jesus."

He spoke similarly in his presidential address:

> Belief in free thought as the way to religious truth and as a basis of church membership is a daring and heroic act of faith, a daring affirmation of belief in God. It does not mean, "I have no creed" or even "no one has a right to impose a creed on me." . . . It is the profound faith that God can and will be realized by reverent free thought, by sincere effort, by the heart and mind which seeks for Him in spirit and in truth. It is the faith of Jesus when he said, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The faith which is at the basis of our principle of freedom, and which makes us a religious community, is the faith that true freedom leads to God, to a richer life of the spirit, to a firmer confidence in eternal things, and to a deeper reverence for the Gospel of Jesus and for Christlike men and women. (Quoted in a letter to *Christian World*, May 16, 1929.)

I find it difficult to reconcile these quotations with the statement that "teaching might consist conceivably in lectures on Art and Literature . . . on Science . . . on the New Psychology, or an attack on Orthodoxy, or . . . on Capitalism." Probably one group of statements represents Gow's religious preference, while the other repeats the Unitarian convention, in its way perhaps as moribund as our orthodox convention. But to that religious preference we should gladly respond, as we should welcome the statement in the same letter that the General Assembly hopes to send out missionaries to India as friends and helpers of the religious movements there.

discussion society, a form of group to which progress is largely irrelevant. It seems inherent, therefore, in such a polity that it has no Foreign Mission. How much the body loses by this will be appreciated by those who have had the opportunity to observe the degree to which the influences of Foreign Missions have clarified the message of the home Church and inspired it to self-sacrifice. There are Christian bodies which would be dead to-day but for the new life and conviction which have come to them as they tried to spread to other nations the good news which had meant so much to themselves. Yet the strong ethical and humanitarian convictions of the Unitarians would seem to give them peculiar qualification for undertaking that championship at close quarters of the rights of the more primitive races which has always fallen to the foreign missionary, and that personal dedication to the service of those races which has been the glory of most branches of the Church for the last century. If, too, the Unitarians have a Gospel to spread, their breadth of mind and intellectual sympathy would fit them to be missionaries of the message of Jesus about God to the Eastern races, who surely need that message.

The fact is that Unitarian experience in Britain or America does not prove that a Unitarian theology of God and Jesus is sterile, for the Unitarian Congregations have been handicapped by a polity which does not allow them to say that they possess a Gospel.

Most of us feel that the Church rests on a conviction and exists to propagate it, the conviction that God is our Father and that we cannot truly live without Him. According to that conviction she appraises everything in life. Though nothing human will fall outside her scope, that conviction is her foundation and the governing standard of her judgments. The Church does not exist to provide a forum where ideas of any quality on any subject may jostle one another on equal terms to secure attention. She exists to bring men to God.

We should agree with our Unitarian friends that this involves the pursuit of truth. That is essential to keep religion healthy, sweet and sufficiently progressive to

meet every contemporary demand. That, of course, is the conviction which has inspired this book. Here in the past the Church has failed disastrously and for all to see. But it is only one function of the Christian movement. It is like the glands which regulate the normal operation of the other organs of the body. To concentrate all the interest of a religious community upon the pursuit of truth is as if a physician were to urge people in natural health to concentrate upon the stimulation of their glands. The Church exists to preach a message and to live a life.

The Church must be founded on the view of God which Jesus gave and which the Christian centuries have developed from his teaching. God has revealed Himself to men, and He still continues His revelation. This has possessed the power of all healthy organisms to throw off useless members and to specialize and elaborate those better suited to its later environment. We rejoice in the assurance that God has not yet opened all the treasuries that the message of Jesus is destined to unlock for generation after generation. But the Church is made by the Gospel. It lives to preach it to men and to pass on to them the faith in the Father and the inspiration to a new morality, a new relation to our brothers, which that Gospel must produce. Theory is comparatively unimportant, but anything which *does* less than this can hardly claim the title of a Christian Church.

The idea that God's revelation is progressive has, however, important consequences. It means that at certain crises a voice must bid men keep step with the revelation. "You have heard this and that said by them of old time, but I say to you a new thing." Especially during the intermediate processes of persuasion the changes may be perplexing in theology and terrifying in the practical disturbance they cause, but they need involve no commensurate change in religion. The growth of religion, as of all the higher activities of the human spirit, has always been attended by alteration of its outward statement. The building completed, the scaffolding is done with. A maturer art can

dispense with the detail and the conventions of an older school. "Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul." When therefore some assert that it is not worth while to go on preaching if we have no longer the assurance of a miraculous, cataclysmic intervention to establish by the Incarnation alike the transcendence of the divine goodness and its immanence in all our life, our answer must be that we have to learn to believe in God without this aid. The revelation of a personal God who is our Father must be its own advocate and guarantee. The power to secure acceptance rests in the message and not in an external authentication by a divine figure upon earth.

But there will be special sympathy for those who feel that they have lost much, some would say all, if they can no longer lift their hearts in prayer to Jesus Christ, who "took to heaven a human brow" and pleads "with man's voice" in the presence of God. Yet is not this tantamount to saying that by reason of some aloofness or hardness in His nature, God is not enough for faith? I am sure that, if they hold firmly to Jesus' own trust in the love of God, they will find that *though their theology is modified, their religion is altered little.* New coinage has been exchanged for old, but the main values remain the same.

Let us ask why men worship Jesus. It is because in him they think that they are in contact with the Being whom we call God. In Jesus the Godhead is "veiled in flesh," but it is God they seek behind the veil. When men sing "O Jesus, King most wonderful," or "Jesus, the very thought of Thee," they value the memories of the earthly life, but their worship is given to God-incarnate-in-Jesus, the Being that theology would clumsily describe as the Second Person of the Trinity. When men read "I am the Good Shepherd," they are dwelling upon the divine love.

Yet Jesus taught his disciples to go to God direct. Why should we not go direct? The obstacle seems to be our inveterate reluctance to credit anything so wonderful as Jesus' view of God. When we yield to that reluctance and concentrate our worship upon Jesus rather than God, we are unintentionally deepening the lines of association in

our minds connecting the thought of God with a slavish shrinking from communion with Him. If we and the Church corporate took the trouble to train our imaginations to conceive God as Father, dealing fatherly with us in every relation, which we take to dwell upon the love of Christ, we should find freer access to His presence.

When we get to that point, we may ask whether there is anything of *religious* value which is destroyed by a belief that Jesus was human. The writer of the Fourth Gospel made Jesus say, "I am the Good Shepherd": we can use it of God, or join with the Psalmist to rejoice that "The Lord is my Shepherd": it makes no difference to the experience. The Fourth Gospel pictures Jesus as the Vine; we can read the passage of God and rejoice to abide in Him: the abiding and the fruit are the same. What consolation has come to men who in distress have read the promise "I will not leave you orphaned, I am coming to you!" But it was as exalted Lord that they expected Him, and if the Father comes to us in our extremity, we can be orphans no more. Just so Paul prayed "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," Christ, that is, exalted to partake of the divine power. That always meant God and of God we can say it. Or again, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." That, too, meant Christ conceived as God, and we can share the experience when we say "I live, yet not I, but God lives in me." The same principle applies to our hymns of adoration to Jesus. Once we have the conception of God which Jesus tried to teach—and without it have we the right to call ourselves Christians?—in such hymns as "O Jesus Christ, grow thou in me" or "Jesus, the very thought of Thee," we shall lose nothing if we turn our thought to the Father. This identification will often help us to worship with those who retain the older view, but it gives us far more than that—it allows us to enter into the spiritual values of all that is most beautiful in the tradition of the Church.*

* There is more than a suggestion of this identification in Rom. viii. 9–11, where the same divine presence giving rise to the same experience is called in successive sentences "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," "Christ," "the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead," and "the indwelling Spirit."

Is there any element of tenderness or redemptive love in Jesus which is not in God the Father, as Jesus used to picture Him? God watched over the harlot and the publican, for He sent His sun and rain to meet their need and lighten their way, just as for the good. Over a single sinner that repented He Himself rejoiced—for that is the meaning of the Hebraism " in the presence of the angels of God." He sought for the lost sheep and sorrowed till the prodigal came home. Therefore it is natural for us to connect the Cross with an element inherent in the character of God, which makes Him suffer to bring men back from the far country of their sins.

Instead of a doctrine of Incarnation raising problems to perplex the inquiring mind, we have, on the one hand, a human figure who trod the path we tread and helped his fellows to see what God was like—there is something wonderful to preach in that—and on the other hand God the Father, more perfect and more tender to His children than even Jesus could be. Have we lost anything?

I admit that among those brought up in orthodoxy and its beautiful convention, it is not so *easy* to preach the nearness of the unseen Father as it is to attribute the same love to the glorified figure of the Master whom the Gospels bring so close to us, but remember that there is an increasing number of those whom the attempt to interpose the figure of a divine Christ rouses to suspicion or actively repels. The ease with which it seems possible to preach a divine Christ is not an unmixed advantage. In the history of religion all change has been resisted with the argument that the older way was easier for the multitude. But that was only the inevitable result of use and wont.

Most of the difficulty would pass away if we were to transmute our " communion with the living Christ " into the simple joy of communion with the Father. Under either term it is God we seek and find. What we need is the devotion which the Hindu describes as *bhakti*, the warm, personal affection for the God who surrounds and embraces us. In spite of many influences around them denying that God is personal enough for communion, and of the more

serious hindrance of popular descriptions of the gods which debase their associations, outstanding Hindu devotees have contrived to reach and maintain the attitude of affectionate and receptive adoration. Such a devotion ought to be ten times more natural to those who go to school to Jesus and learn what he taught of the Father. Christian mystics have proved it so. Hitherto the main effort of the organized Church has gone to popularize a devotion to Jesus; it will be her task and her privilege to spread throughout her membership a devotion to the Father of whom Jesus loved to speak.

After all the Gospel so conceived is the Gospel that Jesus preached. It comes to us illuminated by the majesty, purity and attractive beauty of his example.

At the end of *Reality* Streeter has a passage of real inspiration in which he describes the power that the Christian message can bring to individuals and to the Church:

> Let us suppose a man to think of God in terms of Christ, to be convinced, that is, that God is sublimely sensible, absolutely reliable, wholly loving; suppose further that, through something like the "prayer of quiet"—concentrated but not, I think, too long continued—he were to allow that vision, that idea, to "work" in his subconscious mind. Should we not expect such a one to achieve enhancement of vitality, conquest of temptation, superiority to pain, triumph over circumstance? For him vision would be translated into power. And suppose not one man but a great company were to see that vision and appropriate it, then, in their united power, would not the Kingdom of God be at hand?
>
> "If ye have faith . . . ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed . . ." No word of the Master has seemed so wildly visionary as this, none has so often been toned down and explained away. But by "faith" Christ meant an absolute inward appropriation of the Vision of God—of God conceived and felt as He knew Him. And He was not addressing a single individual,

> but a brotherhood which He meant to be the core of the faithful "remnant" of a nation conscious of a world-mission. It was not a poet's dream, it was scientific fact, that His Vision of God, if accepted and retained for a generation unadulterated and unimpaired by a world-wide brotherhood of men, would have generated a power before which all obstacles would have gone down. What Christ said was sober fact then, and it is sober fact to-day. (Pp. 301 f. Macmillan.)

The words of the first sentence "in terms of Christ" are obviously defined in the sentences which follow, and in such a statement of Christianity there is nothing which one who accepts the position of this book cannot affirm with all his heart.

XIII

Summary

In its present form Christianity not the final religion. Religion must be a continuous approximation to Reality. We may hope for a faith taking the best in the other religions under the leadership of Christianity. Possible contributions of the other great religions.

Needless fear of 'syncretism.' In no land has God left Himself without witness.

Yet we must propagate the highest we know; Christianity indeed has so much to give :—

(*a*) its power of self-purification ;
(*b*) its belief that God is personal ;
(*c*) its belief that God is holy,
(*d*) and loving, as against the doctrine of *karma ;*
(*e*) its lofty doctrine of man ;
(*f*) its high ethic ;
(*g*) its conviction of personal immortality,
(*h*) and especially the figure of Jesus.

The world everywhere requires such a message, even to preserve the higher spiritual elements in the decaying older faiths. The need of the primitive peoples.

This message has the advantage :

1. of abandoning the claim for the special inspiration of the Bible ;
2. of abandoning an exclusive claim for Jesus ;
3. of escaping the subtleties of credal theology,
4. and of doing justice to the *preparatio evangelica* in the experience of other races.

Christianity will find its life in losing it.

XIII

CHRISTIANITY AND THE OTHER GREAT RELIGIONS

Is Christianity, then, the final religion? In its present form almost certainly 'No.' It has changed too frequently and too rapidly for that. There ought indeed to be special warning in the rapidity of the changes during the last fifty years. We can no longer be satisfied with the foundations on which earlier generations based their assurance of finality, the infallible Church, the infallible Bible, or the infallible Person.

Jesus reveals God with supreme simplicity and carries to races of the most varied development the conviction that he knows the things of which he speaks and that his life testifies to a communion with God which is authoritative for men. And yet all the time he was human, subject to mistake, limited in the range of his thought, not always able to shake off the moral prejudices of his environment. He was a prophet, and his uniqueness among the prophets of all human history came not by a divine nature but by his achievement of sonship. He was the founder of a religion, like other founders of religions, but head and shoulders above the rest.

These are not the elements that make finality; indeed the whole trend of the argument of this book is to show that living religion can be no more than an advancing approximation to the unseen Reality in which we exist. How God will lead the race is beyond our predicting. Will He send some revelation completely new for the next stage of our religious pilgrimage, or, second, will Christianity evolve in such a way as by itself to provide all the guidance the world needs, or, third, will there be a general movement of world religion

under the leadership of Christianity (it alone is qualified to lead), which shall take each and any truth that other religions have to offer and range them all in a system of teaching and worship? Of the three alternatives the last seems most probable; from what we have seen of God's working we should expect Him to expand and to develop, but not to cast aside, what so far He has taught.

What will the great non-Christian religions bring to a world-faith? That is difficult for a Christian to answer just because he is bound to look at the other religions through Christian glasses. It is only with fuller, more friendly, humbler contact that we shall be able to measure their contribution, but anyone so concerned with Foreign Missions as I, must attempt to suggest the way we shall form our estimate. Space allows of no more than a suggestion.

When China returns to her balance, Confucianism may bring a respect for the past spiritual history of many races which shall make us, as von Hügel wished for the younger generation in Britain, more 'docile,' more patient to believe that we cannot indiscriminately scrap the past, and consequently more disciplined to obedience.

Buddhism and Hinduism, sisters as they are, may bring to us in a doctrine of *karma*, purified from the pedantic inhumanity of much of its statement, a keener sense of the inescapable consequences of our deeds. It is practically certain that in some form their message of *ahimsa*, the refusal to harm life, will find its place. Anyone who knows the talk of an Indian bazar will agree that in spite of amusing inconsistencies this thought is among the deepest religious instincts of the Indian peasant, and it underlies Mahatma Gandhi's principle of *Satyagraha*, or positive resistance to evil by the spiritual forces of martyrdom and without violence.* The world has not yet seen how potent is that principle. It will reinforce some of those 'hard sayings' of Jesus with which we Christians have temporized. The doctrine of *mukti* or *moksha*, salvation from earthly interests and the cares they bring, may find its reconciliation with the

* Schweitzer's Ethic of reverence for life has obvious affinities with the Indian feeling.

Christian teaching of the glory of God's world, and yet add new point to the call of Jesus to lose life that we may save it. Hinduism again with its caste loyalties, and perhaps even the communal religion of primitive tribes, may help us to act more sincerely on the belief that we are members one of another. What Islam can contribute is harder to suggest. It will, of course, insist with the cumulative force of an invaluable tradition upon the unity of God, but, in any attempt to give a positive message to a world which attaches importance to the idea of evolution, it is heavily weighted by its rigid theory of verbal inspiration. On the other hand, its very rigidity has provoked into existence a school of mystics who meditate upon God and devote themselves to His adoration. That school may play its part in the worship of centuries to come. D. B. Macdonald would probably link with this the Moslem doctrine of the inner light—not unlike that of Quakerism—which guides men onward when reason can no longer see the way.* On the side of practical religion Islam has been successful where Christianity has often failed conspicuously; it has made men of all races feel that, once within the fold of the faith, they must have no more regard to racial distinctions and superiorities.

Bahaism may supply the corrective to the Moslem theory of verbal inspiration in the insistence of its leader, the Bāb, that revelation is to go on to the end of time. The Bāb believed that in all the history of religion each prophet had attempted to clear the way for a successor who should alter the old emphasis and add some further vision, and that, in spite of this, the contemporaries of the successor had always rejected him. He urged, therefore, that his followers should study to be sensitive to the breath of God from unexpected quarters, and that if any prophet claimed to have a fresh revelation, they should examine it with open minds. The thought has kinship with those noble words of John Robinson to the Pilgrim Fathers before they left Holland :—" The Lord hath more light and truth yet, to break forth out of His holy word."

* *Aspects of Islam*, pp. 148 ff.

In the time of the early Church Judaism took the wrong turning (not without provocation, as previous pages have suggested), and leaving the more universal teaching of the Old Testament to the Christians, concentrated on the preservation of the ritual and of the national identity. Christian persecution drove them further in upon themselves. But Judaism stands as the monument of a continuous faith in the living God without intermediary. If the Jews under freer conditions can accept the thought and spirit of evolution and use it to set the weightier matters of the law in their true perspective, if they can surrender their particularism in a desire to make their faith living for all men, they may lose the external identity to which they cling, but they may make one more contribution to the world's communion with God. In any case we owe them for the Old Testament a debt without parallel, and, above all, they gave us Jesus. Many Jews at once emancipated in thought and deeply religious are taking pride in this gift. When they find Christians willing to treat Jesus not as God the Son but as the greatest of prophets, they will help to press home upon the world his message of the holiness and the Fatherhood of God.*

To all this some will answer nervously: "But this is syncretism!" We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by words. Syncretism is a word of abuse in foreign missionary circles, like Bolshevism in circles political and economic. Both words seem to paralyse the reasoning faculties of certain hearers and to deprive them of the capacity to examine the evidence of danger. The Oxford Dictionary defines Syncretism as "the attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, especially in philosophy or religion." What has been suggested in the last two pages does not fall under that definition, for obviously the elements which each religious system can hope to bring into organic union with the rest, will not be "diverse or opposite." But the definition quoted is too short to be quite satisfactory. In the mouths of those who use it as a protest against something which seems to them to threaten the purity, and probably the exclusiveness,

* Such books as Montefiore's *Synoptic Gospels* are evidence of this.

of their religion, the word has a mental flavour more significant than anything stated in the definition. It calls up the picture of a man deliberately setting to work to use each of a long list of materials, not because it serves any fundamental purpose to include them all, but because they are there and he does not want to leave any out. Just so the art teacher who paints an exercise to show the relative values of a certain set of colours, does not produce a picture. The poet who bases his verses on an acrostic, handicaps his poem. The result of syncretism, if we may change the metaphor, is a mechanical mixture and not a chemical compound, still less an organic unity. Inasmuch as religion must be an organic unity, we shall agree that syncretism is futile, for it is prepared to sacrifice truth for the sake of apparent harmony and comprehensiveness.

But it is not syncretism to look for a fuller and richer faith than we have yet reached and to believe that God, who has nowhere left Himself without witness, will use the highest intuitions of other systems and of many races to enrich the thinking and worship of mankind. Is it the part of true religion to reject an idea because it comes from without the circle previously explored? Can we conceive that Jesus took no hint from foreigners? There were elements in the Old Testament and in the religion of his time which had their origin abroad. In the latter half of the second century Christianity began to utilize Greek philosophy to define its meaning, and in doing so added new elements which have affected its presentation from then till now; it took law from the Romans and incorporated that also, it even went so far as to adopt many of the pagan ceremonies and ornaments for the ritual of the Church. It did this because it was face to face with a new world, as we are to-day. The result was not all disaster. It need not be disaster to-day, if we follow truth and principle, not mere popular expediency, in what we incorporate.

While, however, the Christian must pray for a perpetual readiness to identify, to welcome and to obey each further truth as it rises above his horizon, his most binding duty is to propagate everywhere the highest that he already knows.

Truth is the ever closer approach to Reality. But we shall make poor progress if we seek only an approach of the intellect. We need a sensitiveness which will enable us to lay hold upon spiritual ultimates, what the Church calls "the things of God," and it must be plain that this can only come as we share in the divine activity. We shall only feel truly as we live truly. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect." And seeing that part of the divine perfection is its self-revelation to men in their need, we are bound to pass on to others the good news of God. We hold our peace at our own spiritual peril.

This applies to all religions in which there is the joyful consciousness of a revelation from God. The belief which is not missionary will have nothing to contribute to a world religion. But it applies most of all to Christianity, for Christianity alone is fitted to lead.

Think for a little how much Christianity has to give. The more we study the theory, and not less the practice, of the other great religions, the more we shall be impressed with the help it offers. When a man who is a sincere Christian, trying to bring men in this country to the knowledge of God, says that he does not see why we should preach the Christian message to the nations of the East, since "they are well enough with their own religions," it is fairly safe to assume that he has not studied these religions in their practical working, or, indeed, in their theory. The sentimentalism which expresses such opinions without taking the trouble to examine the facts is not likely to advance the cause of truth or religion.

Relative though we now see it to be, Christianity provides by far the completest and the most convincing revelation of God.

(*a*) Beyond any other religion Christianity seems to have the capacity for self-purification characteristic of all active life. It can dissolve away the useless and detrimental elements and replace them by ideas and practices more adapted to the environment. In this case the environment does not mean the vulgar demands and approbations which may bring popularity for a time, but the growing moral

sensitiveness of the race. Those who have dwelt upon the conservatism of many branches of the Church and upon the support these have often given to reaction, may be inclined to contest this claim. Yet on a long view it can be established. The general Christian movement has been one of moral and spiritual advance. It is no less certainly an advance because it has been slow and grudging. The reason is that in the sincerity of Jesus, in his close relation to actual life and in his principle that we must only associate with God that which seems to our generation worthy of His character, we have the guarantee that the Christian revelation will not stand still. In no other religion is there anything like it, except in the Bahai theory mentioned on p. 319, and that has not yet stood the test of a century.

(*b*) There is the belief that God is personal, dealing with us according to the moral and spiritual laws which are relevant only for the relation of personal beings. Of the great ethnic religions Islam alone has any parallel to this. The personal deities of later Buddhism are accretions and have neither part nor lot in the original teaching of Buddha. In Hinduism, where pantheism has dissolved the instinct for moral and spiritual discrimination, there are gods many and lords many,—it is this, of course, that makes possible the *bhakti* mentioned on p. 313—but the majority of Indian religious teachers regard God as far removed from the category of personality. The *bhakti* movement is occasional and isolated, a protest of the human soul against the sunless divinity of Indian philosophy.

(*c*) There is also the assurance that God is holy—I use the word in its modern sense, not in the sense of the "numinous." It is here that Islam breaks down, as everyone may see who will study the Qur'an for himself. The absence of this idea in Islam is one of the reasons which has disqualified it from meeting the needs of a modern state. Those who think of God as holy are perpetually challenged to revise and exalt their conceptions of Him. For it is obvious that the meaning which we attach to the word must depend upon the degree to which our own moral consciousness has grown. The belief that God is holy stimulates men to go on to seek

a deeper understanding of what holiness involves. Islam offers little of this stimulus. Hinduism in its popular form summons men to worship gods who, like the gods of Greece, are definitely wicked. "Think what it must be," someone has well said, "to have a *wicked God!*" Christianity, on the other hand, insists with increasing emphasis on the moral goodness of God. There are immense countries where life would be transformed if men believed that.

(*d*) Yet this intensely moral Being is also full of love. He is our heavenly Father. How unique is this message of Jesus! How many philosophies and theologies it sweeps away! It is illustrated most clearly in the preaching of forgiveness. To the Hindu such a thought is at first repellent. According to the theory of *karma* each sin ought to bring its own exact requital, and any other treatment of offenders is a condonation. The men of the East fail to see that in the strict doctrine of *karma* or of the Buddhist wheel there is no place for a decent God—the current slang expresses my meaning best—a God who does not desire the death of the wicked. For the study of the problem of redemption leads more and more surely to the assurance that the doctrine of *karma* is immoral, in that it ignores the effect of mechanical requital upon the individual human soul. Though the good news may take many a day to win a hearing, it is indeed good news that God treats men, not as cases under the abstract law but as persons for whose regeneration He, the Father, is responsible. There is nothing in any of the other religions of the world like this doctrine of an ethical, loving, redeeming Fatherhood. When it is connected with the thought that God suffers for the sin of men, in Moslem eyes it may be a scandalous contradiction of the arbitrary majesty of God, as the Cross was to the Jews. To the Hindus, as to the Greeks of Paul's day, it is foolishness. But it is not the condonation of sin. Indeed it offers the world's best hope that sin shall be put away.

(*e*) In comparison with other religions the paradox of Christianity is that with so high a doctrine of God, it combines the highest doctrine of man. The general thought of the East, as it is seen in Hinduism and Buddhism, is pessi-

mistic about human life and its meaning. Life is irretrievably cursed with desire and there is no salvation worth praying for, except the deliverance from the prison house of human existence. This theory is not compatible with any sort of social or national development and it is interesting to see how intermittent and patchy is its influence on the minds of Eastern reformers, and indeed on all taking part in movements for national revival. These realize that there can be no such thing as public spirit, if good action, not less than bad, binds the doer with one more rope to the accursed wheel of life. They are therefore more favourably disposed to Christianity. The Christian missionary teaches that God reveals Himself in human life, as He revealed Himself in Jesus, and that men are not only the children of God, but also His fellow-workers. The world stands to gain immeasurable hope and stimulus from Jesus' doctrine of man.

(*f*) There is the corresponding Christian ethic for Society. In ethics doubtless we can learn much from other moral codes, yet at the end there is a unique balance about the Christian ethic and a unique adaptability to the demands of an expanding civilization, both springing naturally from the conceptions of God out of which that ethic has grown. Islam bases part of its ethic upon an international theocracy whose subjects are commissioned to use force to convert or destroy the infidel. Hinduism regards men of another race, together with its own outcastes, as untouchable and subhuman. Confucianism lays stress on the obligations of the family in a way that has poisoned civic righteousness. Buddhism is disqualified by the pessimism mentioned in the last paragraph. But by teaching that all men in need are our neighbours and that we are called to love our neighbours, Christianity makes it possible to combine harmoniously a regard for the individual, the family, the group, the race and the world commonwealth.

(*g*) The Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God carries with it the conviction of personal immortality, based on communion with Him. It is pathetic to discover what bereavement means in a non-Christian society. Because God is his Father, the Christian believes that He will allow none of the fine values of human experience to be lost.

(*b*) All these great ideas are authenticated by the figure of Jesus himself. His story gives them point. The fact that he died for his message adds indescribably to its challenge. Those who have seen the celebration of the deaths of Hasan and Hosein in the Moslem festival of the Moharram will tell of the passionate sympathy which the story of their death evokes, and of the degree to which that sympathy touches even the foreign observer. In that comparison we can form some idea of the impression made by the death of Jesus, to-day throughout the world not less than in past centuries. Hasan was poisoned and Hosein was surrounded and killed at Kerbela in a fight for the succession, much as Harold was killed at Hastings. They were victims but hardly martyrs, they lost their lives, but they had no message to seal. Jesus had a message of love and liberation and sealed it with his life. With that message of love and liberation, authenticated by that story, the Christian Church is commissioned.

As I have summarized these elements of Christian truth, which, taken together, are peculiar to Christianity, they have sounded familiar and almost trite, but anyone who goes through them imaginatively and sets them against the other great religions of the world will see how deep is their significance. If only the Eastern races could bring themselves to believe the Christian ideas of God and man, how the fetters of fear would fall from them and how their activity would be released! As it is, their old faiths are giving way under the new strain of contact with Western civilization and they have nothing to put in their place. Already the educated classes have lost their hold upon the beliefs of their ancestors, and now the artisans and small yeomen are coming under the same mordant influences. Over a large part of the field it is not a battle between Christianity and the old religion; Western knowledge has undermined the old religion; it is a battle for the preservation of any kind of belief in God. In this battle our business is to fight alongside our brothers of other faiths. We may be assured that in this comradeship, everything that Christianity has to give will receive the fullest recognition. But it is essential that we should not be slack to give it.

Such a fellowship in the search for God may have one further consequence. There is a real danger lest, with the rubbish, the nobler elements of the ethnic religions may go to the dustheap. If their traditional followers find these religions inadequate for the stresses of a civilization pulled this way by indigenous forces and that way by forces acting from outside, they will be inclined to reject them without mercy or discrimination. It would be a calamity if this were to happen, for any attempt at revival afterwards would be artificial. But if each race working with Christians and others in a fellowship of worship and exploration, can bring to the resultant ideas of God and man that which is vitalizing in its own religious experience, this element will be protected and preserved in the higher faith which all unite to seek.

If so much can be said of the great civilizations, how far more clear is the obligation to preach the good news of Jesus to the primitive races! Among those who have made even a superficial study of their condition in the present day, it is a commonplace that contact with the white races has undermined and in many cases carried away the foundations of their religion. Since the social order of primitive tribes is always intimately connected with their religious beliefs, with their taboos and other sanctions for morality, their social order also has broken down. Yet those who speak of foreign missions as a needless interference with existent faith, ignore these commonplaces with a perseverance which suggests that they are reluctant to face the truth and fulfil its obligations. It is a privilege never to be forgotten to see men and women, true followers of Jesus, living a life of Christian service amid tribes not long reclaimed from cannibalism, or to watch the process by which those for whom white "civilization" seems able to do so little are gradually lifted into self-respect. A Church which can neglect these child races, threatened as they are upon every side, has so much the less right to claim the Christian name.

Some may suspect that the thought of this book takes the life and power out of the missionary message. I doubt whether this is true. I have tried to show how much a Christianity based on a human Jesus has to give to the great

civilizations of the East. As for the primitive tribes, what they accept of the teaching given to them is notoriously something very simple. Missionary observers often report that they lay hold of the ideas of one great Father who loves them, in place of the (mainly evil) spirits before whom they used to cower, of a messenger of beautiful character who came on earth to teach men of Him, and of a new morality. It is possible that the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus helps some to accept the Christian teaching of the Father, but there must be many others whom that doctrine perplexes and retards. The newer teaching may seem austere, but in the long run it is less confusing to thought than the theory of an incarnation.

The most serious difficulty will lie in the use of the Bible. Yet this arises independently from the degree to which the doctrines of the Bible are interwoven with Jewish ritual and philosophy. Even for those cradled in the higher religions of the Far East a course of careful teaching is essential, if they are to make themselves at home in such books as Hebrews or in sections of the Pauline Epistles, and we can hardly expect the primitive races to find spiritual nourishment in the doctrinal parts of Romans or Ephesians. So much is true even on the most orthodox view. But all those who accept modern criticism are committed to an explanation of the Bible which must make it impossible for inquirers or converts to regard it as an authority to be obeyed without discrimination. If, for instance, a missionary does not believe that the swine of Gadara perished in the manner of Mark's report, that five and four thousand people were miraculously fed, or that there is sufficient testimony to establish the raising of Lazarus, he is thereby committed to teach his Indian or Chinese converts to discriminate between what they can and cannot accept in the New Testament. He will be anxious to guard them from treating whole chapters of the Apocalypse as Christian, or looking for a second coming of Christ on the basis of the predictions in the Gospels. That is to say, criticism will compel him to teach the Bible with selective emphasis.

Those who look to Jesus as a human prophet will have to carry the selection rather further,—that is all. They will

have to depend less on the wording of the Bible and more on the general conception of the Fatherhood of God which Christianity has brought us. They will dwell more on the story of Jesus, his suffering and the assurance of his victory, than on the theology about him found in the New Testament. They will lay more stress upon Paul's spiritual experience than upon the conception of the exaltation of Christ by which he explained it. There is evidence from all parts of the world, especially from the East, that converts often show an unexpected capacity for laying the literal upon one side and using the spiritual meaning to feed their souls. In so far as Christianity approximates to and embodies ultimate truth about God, we need not fear that it will be impossible to overcome the difficulties created by the Bible text.

We can anticipate further practical consequences in the contact of Christians with those of other races.

1. There will be gain in the abandonment of a special claim for the inspiration of the Bible. The disadvantages of any such claim have been clearest where the missionary has put forward the theory of Biblical inerrancy. For the Hindu is convinced that the Vedas are fully inspired and the Moslem has a doctrine of verbal inspiration which leaves our Fundamentalists panting behind. So the result of any parallel claim for the Christian books is a slanging-match of rival infallibilities. It would be hard to imagine anything less likely to propagate a spiritual message. The same is true in essentials of any attempt to maintain an exclusive claim for Christianity, even though it falls short of a claim for verbal inspiration. There is something naturally antagonizing in the suggestion that the Christian message has an inherent right to preferential consideration. That is one reason why the dawning historic consciousness of the East has been so slow to criticize its own sacred books. Yet they are tenfold more vulnerable to criticism than the documents of Christianity. A new day will come when the missionary can say to the Buddhist or the Hindu, "Here are the results of the criticism of the Bible, they show much overlying accretion and much undoubted good; come and examine them and then let us examine your sacred literature

on the like principles and by the like standards." By that means we may find some unexpected treasure, and we shall certainly be more likely to persuade.

2. In the same way it will be gain to escape the obligation of an exclusive claim for Jesus, a claim, that is, to set him on a separate pedestal, in a separate category, from any of the leaders of the non-Christian faiths. We need no longer isolate him as God the Son from these others who were sons of God. When I was a missionary in India, I felt bound to do this. I never thought of questioning the belief that created the obligation, but even then I had at times an uneasy feeling that I was speaking rather as a propagandist than as a gentleman. If Jesus be set with the rest of the great figures of God's revelation to other races, his grandeur may be left to take care of itself.

3. If the complications of Trinitarian theology are perplexing and repellent to so many among those brought up in a Christian atmosphere and amid the presuppositions on which that theology claims to be founded, we should be glad to be rid of the obligation to give such instruction to the Churches of the East and still more to the primitive races. In any country with an old civilization, whatever the dominant religious philosophy may teach, there are usually indigenous schools whose teachings have close affinity with the Christian doctrines of the transcendence and immanence of God. These have already made it easier for the teaching of Jesus to draw to itself disciples of kindred mind.

4. There will be positive value in being able to treat the religious history of other races as a *preparatio evangelica* corresponding to the various tendencies in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world which at the beginning of the Christian era prepared the highway for the Church. This will be no mere courtesy, valuable as every courtesy is sure to be. Men are more prone to devote themselves to a new religion if they feel that their own race has been able to make some contribution to it. Further, if we adopt this attitude, if we remember how Jesus declared, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil," we are in the way to discover how much another system possesses from which we ourselves stand to profit.

Some missionaries have already taken part in gatherings for worship and religious fellowship in which the members come from various races and cherish beliefs as divergent as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The missionaries speak of these gatherings with enthusiasm. It follows, however, that for the duration of the meetings they have abandoned the exclusive claim often made for Christianity. They go to give and receive like the rest. A principle has been established, though few have realized it, and future missionary effort will probably lay stress on such co-operation to discover light and truth.

There can be no doubt that the Church should try to propagate its message in every country. If it does not, Christianity merely becomes a tribal faith, adopted by and thereafter hereditary among the British and certain other Western peoples. A belief which its followers do not wish to propagate is scarcely worth calling a religion. The converse is that the religion which possesses any portion of truth, holds that truth as a trust for the world, and leaves that trust undischarged at its own peril. We Christians are bound to bring our contribution to the world's knowledge of God. Better a propagandist Christianity that is exclusive than a Christianity that is merely tribal.

But only one condition can make us glad to surrender the exclusive claim for Christianity, endowed, as it surely is, with a revelation of God fuller, purer and more suited to modern needs than any other creed. That condition is that the surrender should help to bring into being a world religion completer and more worthy of God than itself. If everything in Christianity that reveals God best can pass over into that world religion, Christianity will have found its life in losing it.

Christians need look to such a surrender with no apprehension. The contributions which other systems have to bring, all added together, will be of less importance than the good news of the message of Jesus. If there is a universal Gospel for men,—as, if truth is one, there must be,—Jesus will be found standing very near its centre.

XIV

Summary

Reconstruction an anxious task, but can be accomplished in faith. The Christianity of to-day is in many ways superior to that of the early Church and there is much hope for the future.

Possibility that we may come to a new doctrine of Jesus doing justice to his mysterious power.

But for revival we need the joy and spring of the early Church.

We shall not reach Jesus' conviction about God unless we live in his way.

The various international and social problems which show that we are not doing so.

Has the Church a place for those regarding Jesus as he is regarded in this book?

Appendix D. Statement of Meaning of Church Membership.

XIV

THE HOPE OF REVIVAL

I DO not send out this book with a light heart. Men will not read it with a light heart. It is not a pleasant office to challenge a great convention, nobly founded and richly ornamented by the Christian ages as they have passed. The ' moral ' at the end of Robert Louis Stevenson's "House of Eld " comes to mind :

> Old is the tree and the fruit good,
> Very old and thick the wood.
> Woodman, is your courage stout ?
> Beware ! the root is wrapped about
> Your mother's heart, your father's bones.

Yet truth not only demands obedience but gives a reward which Stevenson knew well, though he ignored it when he wrote these pessimistic lines.

In the grey hour before an Alpine dawn we climb uphill to find the pass. We have no guide with us and must pick our own route. It is a stern grind ; step by step we thrust slowly upwards with our eyes fixed on the next six feet of track. Back and knees are tired and not much wind is left. On the mind doubts settle jerkily. Is it worth the labour and the risk ? Have we taken too large a responsibility for the party we lead ? Shall we miss the line or find it only to discover that the changes of the ice this summer have made the final ascent unscalable ? Were we deluded by the hope of a far-extended prospect which inspired our plan of yesternight ?

With such pluck as we can summon we answer to ourselves that the maps show this to be the best path ; the lie of the mountains seems to confirm the map ; our friends are with

us because they agree; above all, this is the slope which the guide advised us to take. So we press on until at last we lift our heads above the rock wall, mount the final steps to the pass and forget the anxiety and the toil in the view spread behind and before us under the morning sun.

All those who advance must reckon with doubt and fear. They must climb in faith. I have written in doubt and fear, but faith is stronger. The visible presence of the Guide is not with us. The Father does not relieve us from the problem of finding our own way. Throughout His dealings with the race He has never relieved His children of that honour. But He helps by progressive revelation and the indwelling of His Spirit. If we obey that directing pressure with the best power and courage He has given us, a corner in the path will come when, though still we do not see Him, we shall be sure that He is there.

By the grace of God Christianity may be a greater power in the future than ever in the past. Even as it is, we should be short-sighted to overlook the aspects in which it is superior to the Christianity of the days that followed Pentecost. Men to-day understand some of the central principles of the teaching of Jesus as the early Church did not, and emphasize them more clearly because they have felt free to discard some of the pagan associations which hampered the first theologians. To-day men understand the connection of morality with true religion as they did not in the first century. Because the ideas are familiar to us, we do not recognize that a score of books published in the last fifty years have a message which for this age is as fruitful as the Epistles. To mention only the dead, such modern saints as Moody, Henry Drummond, Samuel Barnett, Josephine Butler or von Hügel would have received the right hand of fellowship from the heroes of apostolic times. Men in the ministry of this country and missionaries abroad, with laymen in like proportion, are living the Christian life with a sane, unostentatious devotion which has not been surpassed in Christian history. I have seen the leaders of the adolescent Churches in the East and in Africa, and I cannot conceive that the chief apostles were more whole-hearted or more persuasive. The

golden age of religion is not in the past, not even in that wonderful past when the Christian movement was in its first expanding glory. The golden age is in the future.

We need not therefore fear the charge that we are putting weapons into the enemy's hands and that a message so simplified in comparison with orthodoxy will not redeem or inspire. If the message is true, it will bring revival. At some point on the path God will use the new thought as the instrument to make a broad road for many. If it is true, in the long run it must work. There is only one question that matters;—Is it true?

The real 'value' of Jesus is his communication of God. His name and story bring to us a unique assurance that God is Father and that on this assurance we can stake everything. The assurance is more important than that Jesus brought it. For example, from the lips of Jesus we receive with fuller confidence the saying: "If you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him," or "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents;" but it is of higher, indeed of final, importance that, whoever taught them first, a great fellowship of religious minds should have accepted these ideas, should have proved them in the experience of the centuries and should have made them part of the picture of God. What is essential in Jesus is the degree to which he expressed God and the interpretation of God's nature which in contact with his speech, acts and influence we countersign and make our own. The contribution of Christianity to the world is the view of God associated with Jesus, and, if the Christian conception of God is dominant, it is comparatively immaterial whether history is more or less certain about its origin.

As I have suggested already, it is possible that when we have cut away the weaker elements of traditional theology, other thinkers may replace them by a new doctrine of Jesus which, though modified in more than expression, shall correspond in some measure to the teaching of the Creeds. The greatness of Jesus plainly involves mysteries for which

our present sounding-lines are too short. We are far, for instance, from fathoming the meaning of the Resurrection and of the forces which went to the founding of the Church. While it is improbable that any sort of orthodoxy, however modern, would be able to persuade the masses of spiritually-minded people in all lands to accept Jesus as divine in a sense we cannot apply to others, there is much to hope from the sense of liberation, of open air, of honesty beyond suspicion which will come from cutting away the unsound and the half-believed. The noblest thinking follows such periods of liberation.

It is obvious, however, that for any revival which is to set us a further stage on the journey to the Kingdom of God certain conditions must be fulfilled. In spite of its essential loyalty, there is something missing in the Church's corporate life. About 1916 C. E. Montague compared the old soldier with the men of Kitchener's army. He contrasted the efficiency of the veteran, up to every move and trick in the craft of war, with the unschooled, costly rashness of the new recruits. As a fighting instrument under normal circumstances the older man was unmistakably superior. Yet Montague hinted that the veteran sometimes carried too far the fine art of living to fight another day. In spite of their inexperience the men of the newer armies might do better for a forlorn hope. Just so (though there are exceptions) the general religious life of the Churches to-day is often higher in morality and surer in spiritual penetration than were the Churches of New Testament times. The modern Churches are by comparison veteran. The same applies to a large number of outstanding individual Christians. But as a rule they miss the joy and spring and recklessness which marked the early Church. They know their limitations; what is more serious, they accept them. They are not for taking risks. The result is good faithful service, but not victory. For a merely intellectual advance will not meet our need, nor even an advance in spiritual apprehension. To understand Jesus' message is great gain, and it is great gain to appropriate his vision of God. But that is not sufficient. We must take his guidance for our action

as well as for our thought. Indeed since the nature of man is a unity, intellectual and spiritual advance must depend upon advance in conduct.

We shall not reach Jesus' conviction about God unless we live in Jesus' way. Belief in his teaching and imitation of him go together, but of the two, if we could imagine ourselves compelled to choose between them, imitation would be the more important. In other words we shall only apprehend Jesus' vision of God, only find a new understanding of Jesus himself, only sow the seeds of revival, when as individuals and as Churches we follow Jesus more closely in our deed. As we stand to-day, nineteen centuries after his coming, have we the right to claim that we follow? The figures of communicants for the non-Roman Churches of Britain are said to be over six millions. To these we may add the many members of congregations who share the point of view of the particular Church and are often as much influenced by the aims of the Church as if they were communicants. Without the unwisdom of forming a "Christian party" such a multitude could have the deciding voice in the politics of the country. Yet we doubt whether there will not be another war, and spend money on armaments as if we were sure there would. The Church has not acted as if it believed God would have us take risks for peace. We have not travelled nearly far enough in the recognition of the rights of the less organized, the less military and the more primitive races; we have not convinced Indians and Africans, for instance, that we are brothers. As Churches we have made but half-hearted efforts to cut away the root causes of intemperance, gambling and prostitution in our own land; most of the efforts put forth have been altogether too negative.

Our gravest failure, however, lies in our tolerance of the essential inequalities of our social and industrial system. Thank God, things have improved. But then, their badness was appalling. For many it is terrible now. To say nothing of the worst slums, respectable families are housed in tenements where only the most skilled in good living can hope to keep the home sweet and clean. There is no privacy; if

two members of the family get across one another, they have no refuge where one may retire to cool off; they must stew in the same close quarters and get worse across. The young people must do their courting outside in the darker spots between the lamp-posts. The intermittent ragging of the boys (and only the weaklings do not rag) is intolerable to the weary father. Birth control is inevitable because there is nowhere to put three children, nor the money to feed them. The reckless have large families and so condemn many an innocent life to physical suffering and all-round inefficiency. Often it is impossible for the sexes to maintain separation or to sleep in different rooms; the result is demoralization and even incest. A large proportion of the boys and girls have nowhere to play but the streets. That alone delivers some into the hands of the police. Surely the Christian Church could do more to help to solve the housing problem, if Christians cared enough.

Then there is the problem of casual employment and of no employment at all. Casual employment is more common than most middle-class people realize. Yet think what it must mean to the workman to be haunted by the doubt whether at the end of the month he will still be employed. Will he lose his job, perhaps because the season is over, and have to wander from place to place seeking another and losing something of his self-respect with each rebuff? Will his wife and children have to go short? When it comes to such unemployment as has followed in the train of the war, and men by the hundred thousand are condemned to stand about the Labour Exchange and the street corners or kill time, day in, day out, at the club, ought it to be possible for Christians any longer to acquiesce? The organization of our society seems to involve the systematic degradation of personality. And yet apart from a few sporadic protests, Christians in the mass appear to find it natural to acquiesce. A little special disquiet at Christmas when we feel bound to justify the contrast of our own happy luxury, produces a Lord Mayor's Fund; we rejoice to hear that the Government is going to double it, and then we go to sleep again. But night and day in the mining districts unsleeping decay

thins the blood and saps the courage, starves the mothers as they add their own share to the children's portion, and makes the weekly story of the family a downward progress of commonplace despair. The problem is full of perplexity and yet it could be solved if we were prepared to throw into the solution a quarter of the energy, self-denial and financial sacrifice that we made for the war. Could the results of a German victory have been worse?

Even when employment is regular and not underpaid, there is much in our present system that contradicts the doctrine that we are children of one Father. A few months ago I went over the factory of a great catering firm. There were rest-rooms and lunch-rooms and medical attendants, but the actual conditions of work—the machines pushing the next job at the workers with swift, inexorable pressure—were wage-slavery, neither more nor less. Eight hours daily of an unrelieved monotony of toil must in a short time produce a slave mentality. After such a day what wonder if the majority have no appetite for anything better than dog-racing or the paltriest films of the cinemas? And the Churches regret that young men and women are so secular and material in their outlook!

Or there is the actual danger to life and limb. Few consumers of coal have sat down to consider the cost in human life at which coal is got, and the heavy proportion of serious accidents which are not fatal. If we did, some of us, like David handling the water from the well of Bethlehem, would think of coal as "the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives." Yet we must use it or condemn more miners to unemployment. In the same way the railways are remarkably safe for passengers, but not for railwaymen. Time after time one reads of crane accidents and wonders whether they need happen so often. Certainly friends of mine in the docks tell me they think there would be fewer lives lost and limbs broken if a little more money were spent on a better quality of tackle. Has Christianity nothing to say to the bald fact that lives in the Rhondda and Canning Town, the lives of labouring men, are not worth as much as lives in the comfortable suburbs?

The people of the Churches belong in large part to the middle class. How preposterous it would appear to the average middle-class family that any of their own should not be lifted above the typical risks I have just described. They would feel that there was something wrong with the moral order of the universe if from week to week son or brother of theirs had no certainty of employment, and good employment at that, or if he had to face a tenth of the bodily danger which goes with work in the mines or on the railway. It is one of the presuppositions of their class that it should be exempt from the burdens and dangers which fall by immemorial prescription upon the workers, and, if it is not exempt, they will arraign Providence itself for maladministration. There is nothing that sets in such high relief the absence of real brotherhood in our modern society as these unquestioning assumptions of class right.

We may be thankful that the leaders of the Churches have protested against the more flagrant of these daily sins against brotherhood. At one time or another Church Assemblies have applauded addresses and passed protesting resolutions. Some good has been done. But the leaders have not persisted in the attempt to rouse the Church as a whole. They have not sent the fiery cross round their supporters, as each side did in the controversy about religious teaching in the schools. In the meantime the masses of Christian people have done little to urge their leaders on. They had other preoccupations which the fiery cross would have interrupted.

Individual Christians, many in number but few in proportion to the Church's membership, have run their businesses for their employees as well as for themselves, have deliberately rejected the opportunity of making money for some call of public service, or have chosen to live alongside the poor while others removed "for the children's sake" to a suburb. But while their fellows in the Church admire those who do these things—and express it rather fulsomely at times—they regard them as proofs, not that the doer is simply Christian, but that he is a saint, or even perhaps a crank who "strives to wind himself too high for

sinful man beneath the sky." The obligations of simple brotherhood, the responsibility for those in need which Jesus set out so uncompromisingly in the story of the Good Samaritan, are not accepted as binding on the average Christian. Yet the Christian has surely a stronger, because a more consecrated, motive for self-sacrifice than the Trade Unionist, and the assemblies of the Church ought to be able to speak with a sincere, self-less, untiring championship of the suffering poor for which the Trades Union Council cannot have the same inspiration.

There is an almost forgotten saying of Jesus, "How hard it is for the rich to enter into the Kingdom of God!" The Church does not preach it, least of all that portion of the Church which holds most strongly by verbal inspiration. The various branches of the Church seem to agree that Jesus was mistaken here, for they choose men with this handicap for high and representative office and listen to their advice with deference. Yet every Church leader deplores that the sons of these very men drift away from the faith and service of their fathers. The connection is obvious. Wealth is an enervating thing which unfits men for the brave demands of Jesus, and its twin sister, conventionality, poisons the springs of moral judgment. So far from destroying the graven image of riches, the Church has found a niche for it in the sanctuary.

Our Churches are relatively poorer than two generations ago, but they still contain many who are richer than they ought to be. Outside the Churches there are multitudes living in luxury—much of it senseless luxury, for they get from it no increase of life-value—and completely oblivious of their fellows. Every newspaper with its reports of diamond robberies, every advertisement of fur sales, shows how absurd are the superfluities of what must be a considerable class. Some of them ease their consciences by a measure of charity, which frequently does more harm than good. Charity is still necessary and sometimes beautiful, but it makes a poor substitute for justice, equality and brotherhood.

In redemptive activity of one form or another the Churches have a worthy record. They have supported reforms in the

condition of the common people and they have tried with more persistence than other champions to protect the enslaved and oppressed races abroad. Without their efforts the evils would be much worse than they are. But the Church has never effectively and continuously challenged the whole idea of individual gain by competition. Such a challenge is urgent now. Through human history has there ever been a time when clear thinking on the right to acquire possessions, private and corporate, was so essential as today? Yet everyone admits that our thinking is woolly and inconclusive.

We face up to unemployment, and as part of our remedy we attempt to substitute British goods for those made abroad. No one, however, feels a duty to ask what will happen to the workman abroad who made the goods we used to buy. We do not expect statesmen to remember that all God's children are members of one another. Indeed, if they did, we should shake our heads over their unpractical idealism; let them gain for us what they can, without inquiring too carefully who loses.

That way, surely, lies war.

Most members of the civilized races have but little effective interest in those more primitive. The last ten years have witnessed an increasing decay of the old morality of most South African tribes. The old customs and taboos which guided the social life have crumbled before Western contact. Now even the economic life is threatened. A great discovery of copper on the railway in Northern Rhodesia has drawn Western capitalists and seekers of wealth, and everyone who thinks no deeper than the rules of the commercial game will at once agree that these "must" have native labour. For some years the Rhodesian Government has been encouraging the men to go off to mines more distant by requiring the poll-tax in cash, which is hard to come by in the village. Now that the mines are booming in their own territory, the natives have learnt their lesson and flock into the mine compounds, partly for the wages, partly to see the world. The consequence is that they are not on their land at the season to do the heavy digging and the food

supply decreases rapidly. In a short time Northern Rhodesia may have to import its food. Taken with the demoralizing influences of the mine compounds, such a change might well threaten the very existence of the North Rhodesian peoples.* It is nobody's business. Nor are a hundred similar instances. World commerce wants copper and cannot afford to be sentimental about natives. But I wonder what Jesus would have said to it all.

While we tolerate this absence of brotherhood, is it likely that we shall understand Jesus? Whether we worship him as the Incarnate Son, or offer our reverence to him as a human leader, are we not in the position of those to whom he said, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, while you don't do what I say?" (Luke vi. 46). Someone has focussed it in a sentence:—"Our churches are made up of people who would be equally shocked to see Christianity doubted or put into practice." Our obedience has limped after our professions of worship and reverence, but so far behind that we have proved to all the world that we did not appreciate what our professions meant. What new penetration into the mystery of Jesus the future has in store for the Church it is impossible for us to conjecture now, but one thing is certain, —by inexorable spiritual law it can only be granted to those who obey. When we follow Jesus, we shall see revival, and the question of his worship will take care of itself.

Is there a place in the Church for those who humbly desire to follow him as leader, though their view of truth will not allow them to worship him as Lord? †

* See the statements on the depopulation of parts of Africa in E. W. Smith's *The Golden Stool*, Chap. VI. The irony of it is that in destroying the coloured man for the sake of a few years' rapid profit, commerce is wasting the supply of labour which it will need for future development, to say nothing of possible markets of rich promise. "After me the deluge." Even if the prediction above should prove too gloomy, results as harmful have ensued in other industrial areas, and with as little premeditation or scruple.

† See the possible basis for a modern Church on the page following.

APPENDIX D

A BASIS FOR A MODERN CHURCH

(The statement below, drawn up by a Congregational Church for the admission and rededication of its members, may show what is possible to those who accept the position of this book.)

The Meaning of Our Membership

Believing that God, whom Jesus taught us to know as Father, is *my* Father and that I shall find fulness of life in fellowship with Him and with His people, I desire to join this Church.

As a member of this Church *I will try*

(*a*) to live at home and work and play on the six week-days as well as on Sunday by faith in God and in obedience to His will, taking Jesus as my example and his teaching as my standard;

(*b*) to help others according to their need and to share with men in this country and abroad the message of God's love and holiness as Jesus taught it;

(*c*) to follow the way of prayer;

(*d*) to take up such work in the Church as I can do best and to support the Church with money as God has prospered me;

(*e*) to be loyal to the Church's services of worship;

(*f*) to learn all that I can about our religion and the way to make it real for men to-day.

(*g*) to do all I can to bring in a juster, more beautiful and more brotherly order of Society by using my influence as a voter, as a creator of opinion and in such other public service as may offer.

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